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the weekly
Standard

MARCH 16, 1998

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the weekly Standard

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The Audit Bureau Member

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Sid, the Early Years

As Carl Cannon reported in these pages last month, White House staffers have taken to calling Clinton aide Sidney Blumenthal "G.K."—short for "grassy knoll"—in honor of Blumenthal's predilection for conspiracy theories. But even the most diligent Blumenthal fans may not know how deep-seated that passion is.

The Scrapbook recently checked out of the Arlington, Va., public library (the Library of Congress's copy was inexplicably missing) a bizarre little paperback called *Government by Gunplay: Assassination Conspiracy Theories from Dallas to Today*. Copyright 1976, and edited by Sid Blumenthal.

"Conspiracy is an ugly word," screams the cover blurb, "but what has been happening in America for 15 years is ugly. . . . This shocking book puts all the conspiracy concepts together. Here are probing examinations of the crimes themselves, conclusive critiques of governmental whitewashings . . . and the danger they pose for our national integrity and our individual liberties."

The articles that Blumenthal assembled for the book touch all the conspiracists' hot buttons. "What role did the FBI play in the killing of Kennedy?" asks the chapter on Lee Harvey Oswald. An analysis of the Zapruder film proves, perhaps for the first time, that there were four (4) assassins in Dealey Plaza (and you thought there were only three!). An article on the shooting of George Wallace tries to link Wallace's assailant, Arthur Bremer, with the Nixon White House and presents the shooting as a kind of pre-emptive coup: "Bullets instead of ballots had once again dictated who would be president."

As an author, Blumenthal also penned his own contributions to *Government by Gunplay*, and they are slightly less wacko—slightly. In one chapter, he illuminates "How the FBI Tried to Destroy the Black Panthers" (by bumping them off, mostly). "The elimination of the Panthers as a political force," Sid writes, "was a preceding step to Watergate, flowing sequentially into it."

This is a pure expression of the paranoid style, and you could dismiss *Government by Gunplay* as the work of an overexuberant young man—except by all accounts Blumenthal still thinks this way, and is doing his thinking from a taxpayer-funded perch in the White House. Blumenthal writes in the book: "The guardians of the established order see themselves as the only fit rulers." Well put.

Get This Man Some New Talking Points

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan let loose a jaw-dropper in a Q&A with *Newsweek*, defending his diplomacy with Saddam Hussein: "In some cases we have to deal with people we may even consider evil to save lives. One dealt with Eichmann to save lives, to make sure that people would get away from the gas chamber." Oh? Is that how one dealt with Eichmann? Speak for oneself, Kofi.

The Mouth That Roared, and Roared

One of the few pure pleasures of the Monica Lewinsky spectacle has been to watch her goofy, self-promoting attorney, William Ginsburg, slowly disintegrate under the intense heat of his own celebrity. Two weeks ago, you may recall, he bragged to *Time* magazine about his personal closeness to his client: "I kissed that girl's inner thighs when she was six days old." No doubt his fans thought he could never top himself after that. But wait! Attending *Time* magazine's 75th anniversary bash in New York last week, where he mingled with such fellow-celebs as Dr. Kevorkian and Kathie Lee Gifford, Ginsburg offered up a little legal analysis to Neal Travis of the *New York Post*.

If Kenneth Starr indicts Monica, Ginsburg said, "he's finished. It's like the O.J. trial. The American public will put up with only so much prosecutorial conduct." The layers of strangeness here run deep. Does Ginsburg truly believe O.J. Simpson's defense—that the entire criminal-justice apparatus of Los Angeles County conspired to plant evidence, fake lab tests, and otherwise frame O.J.? Or, like Johnnie Cochran, does he just want us to believe that he believes it? And does he want us to believe Kenneth Starr is framing Monica Lewinsky? Faking DNA results, maybe? The possibilities are endless—and horrifying. If we were Monica, we'd be starting to get just the slightest bit worried about our choice of attorney.

Linda Tripp Then and Now

There are two good reasons why you haven't seen Linda Tripp mentioned much recently. First, Tripp is lying low, understandably. Second, and more significant, the Clinton muckraking machine has dug and dug and dug for dirt on Tripp and come up empty. Count on it: If there were sleaze in Tripp's past, the Clintonites would

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have made sure you knew it by now.

Meanwhile Tripp has beefed up her legal team. Her original lawyer, a sole practitioner and agriculture-regulation specialist named James Moody, was overwhelmed by the case of his suddenly famous client and its demands on his time. He has since been joined by two Baltimore lawyers, Anthony Zaccagnini and Joe Murtha, with backgrounds in criminal law. Why criminal law? Fanciful as it may seem, Tripp still faces the prospect of prosecution for taping those infamous Lewinsky phone calls. Tripp lives in Maryland, where such taping is illegal. The law makes exceptions for persons who, like Tripp, tape without knowing that it's illegal to do so, or who are forced to do so by duress or "necessity" of circumstances. For now the Maryland state prosecutor's office has said it will do nothing until the Starr investigation is concluded.

Tripp herself is living in what Zaccagnini calls a "secure location," arranged by her bosses at the Pentagon after threats were made against her. She continues in her Defense Department job, communicating by phone and fax from her "safe house." She's also in frequent communication with Starr's office, preparing for her appearance before the grand jury, which she expects in the next few weeks.

Through her lawyer, Tripp did have one specific request for THE WEEKLY STANDARD: "Take it easy" on the caricatures. "She saw the last one," said Zaccagnini, referring to Kent Lemon's illustration in our Feb. 16 issue, "and she didn't like it a whole lot." It's good to see that she's still able to be censorious.

ET TU, KYOTO

Trent Lott, Jesse Helms, and Chuck Hagel sent a pointed letter to President Clinton on March 3 asking him to personally reassure them that they hadn't been misled by undersecretary of state Stuart Eizenstat. Eizenstat, they wrote, had testified before the Foreign Relations Committee in February that the administration would not implement the Kyoto global-warming treaty without Senate approval. And they quoted his response to a question from Hagel: "We have no intention," Eizenstat said, "through the backdoor or anything else, without Senate confirmation, of trying to impose or take any steps to impose what would be binding restrictions on our companies, on our industry, on our business, or on our agriculture, or on our commerce, or on our country until and unless the Senate of the United States says so."

Meantime, however, the EPA's Web site is abuzz with "Climate Change Action Plans" for the states, suggestions to the states on how they will be able to comply with Kyoto-mandated emission levels (higher gas taxes, for instance), and all manner of "voluntary" programs for businesses and local governments who want to live up to the spirit of the (still-unratified) Kyoto treaty. Many states have already received grants from the EPA to plan their onerous new regulatory regimes.

Contrasting this beaver-like activity with Eizenstat's statement, THE SCRAPBOOK is reminded anew that the key verb of the Clinton era is "to parse." Because, upon parsing Eizenstat's testimony, it's clear he didn't really promise anything. The administration will threaten, cajole, plead with, urge, and cheerlead the states into abiding by Kyoto. And they will do it through front doors, back doors, side doors, and trap doors, whether the Senate approves or not. They'll just never do anything "binding."

Reading between the lines of the Lott-Helms-Hagel letter, it's clear the senators fear they have been had. They're right. They should in return parse the administration's budget requests for EPA, and for Mr. Eizenstat's office, very, very closely.

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Casual

Under the Southern Cross

The other morning, I climbed a volcano. Just a little one, that rejoices in the comic-opera name of Rangitoto and sits on an island of its own near New Zealand's Auckland harbor. As America's Cup aficionados know, Auckland is a mariner's dream of bays and sheltering peninsulas, littered with far-flung islands, and from the summit of Rangitoto the 360 degree panorama—all teal and green sea, flecked with sails and framed in the distance by graciously rounded stretches of land, wooded or urban—leaves the visitor amazed.

Like New Zealand itself, this mountain is young and manages to be simultaneously modest and exotic.

Geologists say that Rangitoto heaved up out of the water around 1300 and was active two centuries ago. Only Maoris witnessed that last eruption. A sketch by a European from the 1880s shows no vegetation, but now the slopes are covered with bush. From the rim, the crater below looks like an enormous bowl lined with treetops.

New Zealand's only creatures were birds, insects, and lizards until the ninth century. Little is known of its first people, and hundreds more years passed before the "great migration" brought the Maoris—Polynesians, in ocean-going canoes—to the place they called Aotearoa, Land of the Long White Cloud. The Dutchman Abel Tasman sailed down the west coast in 1642 and gave the country the name we know it by ("old" Zeeland is a Dutch province). Captain Cook claimed it for England in 1769, but European settlement, mainly from the British Isles, was a 19th and 20th-century phenomenon. Today, a population of 3.5 million—predominantly Anglo, 13 percent Maori—is spread across an area the size of Colorado.

I have just made a sentimental journey to New Zealand. My family lived there in the late 1950s; we left when I was nearly 12. I can report that Huka Falls is, as remembered, turquoise. The luxuriance of the fuchsias and hydrangeas, introduced from Europe, matches the magic of the tree ferns and red pohutukawas. "Hokey pokey" is still the best ice cream in the world.

Some things have changed. The roads are excellent. An economy once dependent on the sale of wool to Britain now features growing and diversified trade oriented to Australia and Asia. There are wineries, and restaurants befitting a tourist destination. Friends who were children are middle-aged, attended by spouses and grown offspring, battered and buoyed by the decades.

The wrecked ship we used to climb on at Waitarere beach is two-thirds buried in the sand. But we found out her name and history: She was a steel-hulled sailing ship called the *Hyderabad* (pronounced "Hodge-a-bed" by the Kiwi assistant at the Maritime Museum), and her skipper ran her onto the beach in 1878 to escape a hurricane.

This time, I noticed New Zealand's lively democracy. The first country to grant women the vote (in 1893), it also had an early welfare state—and a bold retreat from statism, with radical marketization starting in 1984. The day we arrived, a power outage began that left Auckland embarrassingly without electricity for weeks, and pundits argued over whether too much privatization or too little were to blame.

Prime Minister Jenny Shipley also made the front pages, with the "Code of Social and Family Responsibility" she mailed to every household. She wants to spark a national conversation about family breakdown, child neglect, and the dole. Columnists sparred: This was a pious waste of time, a sly prelude to further welfare cuts, or an honorable attempt to raise vital issues. When opposition leader Helen Clark pointed out that Shipley's own "privileged" teenagers are safely stashed at boarding school, the PM told her to "stop being catty."

At our old school in Lower Hutt, the principal (under the gender-neutral regime, no longer a "headmaster") explained the new nationwide system of open enrollment and school-based management. An elected parent and community board, including the principal and a staff representative, drafts each school's goals, manages its budget, and hires its employees, even the principal and teachers. Schools endowed with wise and energetic volunteers have come into their own.

Also unfamiliar is the heightened Maori-consciousness. On the door of a roadside Italian restaurant outside Wanganui, a sign says "Biculturalism Builds Bridges." My newfound old friend Trisha, who works for a member of Parliament, ends her e-mails, "Must away. Kia ora."

New Zealand is a middle-class country. Its houses typically nestle behind hedges or stucco walls, in gardens at once gaudy and trim. But Trisha and her family live outside Wellington on a cliff 600 feet above Pukerua Bay. Only half their view—a mere 180 degrees—is ocean. They look out over the Tasman Sea toward Australia (1,200 miles away), with off to the right the mysterious, beautiful profile of Kapiti Island.

Kapiti, like Rangitoto, is uninhabited, a wildlife refuge. The sea was too rough for a crossing the day we were to hike there. That excursion will have to wait. Must return.

Claudia Winkler

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Correspondence

God and Man in Alabama

Matt Labash suggests that official religious activities in Alabama—like organized school prayer—are appropriate because 96 percent of the state's population identify themselves as Christians ("God and Man in Alabama," March 2). Only a few troublemakers seem to mind. But the Bill of Rights is meant to prevent the tyranny of the majority and protect the rights of troublemakers—and religious dissidents. Advocates of state-sponsored sectarianism often say that the First Amendment guarantees freedom of, not freedom from, religion. But that's precisely wrong. Your freedom from my religion is precisely what the founders intended to protect.

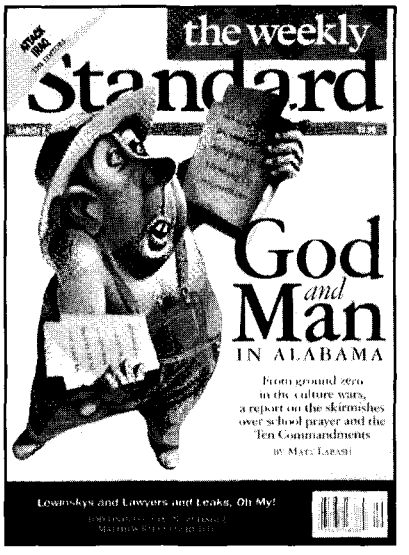
Consider the Alabama school-prayer case that Labash chose not to mention, *Herring* v. *Key*. The plaintiffs are four Jewish children, three of whom have been required to attend Christian sermons and literally forced to pray. At least one child was physically forced by a teacher to bow his head in devotion to Jesus. Another was required to write an essay on "Why Jesus Loves Me" as a punishment for disrupting class. The Herring children have been tormented by classmates and teachers because of their religion.

State endorsement of majoritarian religious practices has not exactly fostered tolerance in Alabama or religious freedom, which the ACLU seeks to protect. If the Alabama schools worried less about promoting love of Jesus (the job of parents and churches) and more about teaching, then their students might understand this simple truth: Prohibitions on establishing religion are essential to protecting free exercise.

WENDY KAMINER
CAMBRIDGE, MA

Matt Labash performed an important service to constitutional democracy by reporting on the political and legal confusion being sown by the ACLU and the judges' usurpation of Alabamians' civil rights to religious expression, including public recognition of the Ten Commandments. As he points out, the First Amendment says, "*Congress* shall make no law." The American people ratified it that way in order to make sure the national government could not interfere with the power of the people *of each state* to decide for themselves how to protect religious liberties and other civil rights. The ACLU's claim that civil liberties would be unprotected if the national courts did not force their version of the First Amendment on citizens of the states is simply untrue. The fact is, every one of the 50 state constitutions guarantees religious and other fundamental civil rights, sometimes more expansively than the federal Constitution as interpreted by national courts.

The long-sought answer to the confusion is simple: Congress can reassert



its coordinate power to declare the Constitution's meaning. One way is to pass what Labash called "federalism-shield" legislation, a concept pioneered by the Tricentennial Foundation and promoted by Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council and a growing coalition of constitutional experts and spokesmen for major religious groups. It's been decades since FDR's Congress restored constitutional democracy to arrogant judges by reminding them of how much power the people's representatives have been granted to control the judiciary. The "federalism-shield" concept revives the authority of Congress, as a co-equal branch, to *interpret* the Constitution along with the judiciary. Thus, if the nation's judges persist in usurping the civil right of state citizens to recognize religious faith in official settings, Congress must defend that right. It can enact laws compelling the courts created by Congress to follow the true, constitutional meaning of religious liberty. Indeed, should Congress shirk its duty under its oath of office to restore the constitutional rights of the people of Alabama and the other states, it would become complicit in the judicial subversion of both religious liberty and self-government.

DENNIS TETI
TRICENTENNIAL FOUNDATION
FOR AMERICA
WASHINGTON, DC

Follow Virginia's Lead

Wonderful! At least one state has meaningful campaign-finance reform—disclosure coupled with term limits—instead of arbitrary, "feel-good" spending limitations (Jan Witold Baran and Allison R. Hayward, "Do It Virginia's Way," Feb. 23).

Newspapers love McCain-Feingold "reforms" that further stifle the voice of the people. Whenever individual spending is restricted, newspapers gain even more influence through editorials and deciding what's fit to print.

Reform is a hot issue, so some incumbents want to get on the bandwagon without hurting themselves. So they support McCain-Feingold, which actually enhances their built-in advantages by limiting spending on behalf of challengers.

Others write their own bills, hoping to impress constituents. Consider Pennsylvania's Bill Gooding, who, if reelected, will have been in the House for over 25 years. During the congressional recess in August he promoted a bill that would, among other phony "reforms," eliminate PAC contributions but not restrict other "special interests." But, just to be safe, his so-called reform would not take effect until after Dec. 31, 1998—when he hopes to have been reelected for his last term.

Real reform, as explained by Baran and Hayward, would encompass disclosure and term limits. The best reform plan can be summed up in eight words: No cash, no foreign contributions, full disclosure immediately. Virginia is on the right track.

ALBERT H. BIENSTOCK
CAMP HILL, PA

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the weekly Standard

NATO AND AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

The Senate will likely vote in the next couple of weeks on the enlargement of NATO to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. The votes are there, and NATO expansion will almost certainly be approved. But a few senators are trying to postpone the vote for several months on the grounds that they are "uncomfortable voting when so many of the purposes and assumptions of NATO enlargement remain either ambiguous or contradictory." It's a pretty transparent ploy: They know they don't have the votes to defeat enlargement, so delay is their only option. But let's pretend they really are undecided, ambivalent, and "uncomfortable." Here are a few unambiguous reasons why we should all be comfortable, even enthusiastic, about NATO enlargement.

First, what's being expanded—and strengthened—is an American-led alliance that has successfully kept the peace in Europe for fifty years and can help keep it for another fifty. Enlarging NATO means extending not only American military leadership—a worthy goal in itself—but also the power and influence of American principles into a part of Europe that in this century has known neither much peace nor much political freedom. The cementing of new alliances shows the continuing vitality of American principles at a time when those principles remain under assault both at home and abroad. Americans ought to be gratified that, despite the increasingly feckless leadership of the Clinton administration, these countries want to join *our* alliance. Their enthusiasm and commitment will make the alliance—and America's role in the world—stronger.

American leadership is the central issue in the NATO enlargement debate. There are two alternatives to extending the sphere of American leadership into Central and Eastern Europe: Either we permit a return to the bloody competition for that strategic corridor that has led to two world wars in this century; or we place our faith in the Europeans' ability to maintain peace themselves through such institutions as the European Union.

To choose the first would be a tragic error, truly unforgivable in light of all we have learned over these past hundred years. But the second course—the "European solution"—is a myth that, if seriously pursued, would also lead to tragic results. Some have argued that it is more important to get the Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs into the European Union than to get them into NATO. They're wrong. What many Europeans—and, unfortunately, some American senators—fail to recognize is that the success of European integration, such as it is, has been possible only because of the protective umbrella of American security guarantees. Take the United States out of the equation, and we're right back where we started, with European great powers jostling for pre-eminence on the continent and, eventually, resorting to the ultimate arbiter in such competitions: war. Perhaps the greatest virtue of the NATO alliance is precisely that it is a U.S.-led alliance and, therefore, not dependent on the realization of assorted Eurofantasies. The Poles and others believe getting into NATO is essential not only to their security but also to their political and economic development. They don't think membership in the European Union is a substitute, and they're right.

The second great virtue of NATO is that it remains, at heart, a security alliance. Although it has also been a vehicle for strengthening Western principles, it is fundamentally about the business of war and peace. Many of the critics of NATO enlargement argue that peace in Central and Eastern Europe can be preserved through arms-control agreements, the strengthening of economic ties, the enhancing of communications, and the integration of peoples and societies across national boundaries. In opposing NATO's enlargement, they ask us to share their dream of the inevitable peaceful consequences of "globalization." Thanks, but we'll pass. Whatever gains have been made along these lines in the past decade have been possible only because the world's underlying security structure has been safeguarded by the United States and its allies. Even the Russian government, which has complained about NATO enlargement, understands the value of a U.S.-led security system in

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Europe and would fear American withdrawal from the continent more than NATO enlargement. The preservation of peace, and the enjoyment of its benefits, depends ultimately on keeping predominant military power in our hands and the hands of our friends. What the world needs today is not a New Age, magic-carpet ride to universal peace, but the strengthening of an old-fashioned security alliance with a proven record of preserving the peace and making possible the prosperity we now enjoy.

Finally, enlarging NATO to include Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic—and, in the coming years, other Central and Eastern European countries—is a moral as well as a self-interested act. Lest we forget, in the Cold War these countries were enslaved to Soviet imperialism. Conservatives especially believed it was a proper American goal to try to free them and their peoples from that awful tyranny. Now they have been freed, thanks to American and NATO perseverance, and they ask to join us as a way of ensuring they cannot be enslaved or invaded again. After a half-century of seeking the liberation of this part of Europe, do we now turn down their request for inclusion in our Western system of peace and freedom? Do we leave them to hang uncertainly and precariously in a no-man's-land that has always featured so much turmoil and destruction? Ronald Reagan called on Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall" in Berlin. NATO expansion is the logical and moral follow-on to Reagan's success.

The Senate should vote to ratify NATO enlargement now. The more we delay, the more we cast doubt on the firmness of our moral and strategic commitments in Europe. We need to take those commitments seriously—which means, incidentally (or not so incidentally)—increasing our defense budget so that our commitments are backed by real and not imaginary power. But let us not be deluded by phony alternatives. In Europe today, as in Asia and the Middle East, there is no alternative to American leadership. Expanding NATO is only one vehicle for such leadership, but it is an important one and deserves enthusiastic support. ♦

Should McCurry Quit?

by Tucker Carlson

If presidential press secretary Mike McCurry seems calm these days, it may be because he has seen it all before. Seventeen years ago this month, McCurry's first boss, Sen. Harrison "Pete" Williams, a four-term Democrat from New Jersey, went on trial for his role in the Abscam scandal. Months before, Williams had been recorded telling an undercover FBI agent that he would help steer federal defense contracts to a titanium mine in Virginia in return for $12.6 million and a cut of future profits. Williams vigorously denied that he had been seeking a bribe, but the FBI tapes produced at trial were devastating. At one point, Williams can be heard telling the agent that it will be his "great pleasure" to "talk to the President of the United States about [the defense contracts] and in a personal way get him as enthusiastic and excited."

When the tapes became public, many predicted Williams would resign in embarrassment. Instead, he was defiant. Citing his high approval ratings back home, Williams and his staff did their best to pretend nothing had happened, even floated rumors that Williams might soon run for governor of New Jersey. Meanwhile, Williams's supporters, led by his steely, ambitious wife, mounted an attack defense on behalf of their man—an "American Dreyfus," they called him. Mike McCurry, who by that point had been Williams's press secretary for almost five years, led the charge, accusing the prosecution of waging an illegal, out-of-control political vendetta against the senator. "The government framed him," insisted McCurry at the time. "The government created the crime and tried to create the evidence."

McCurry's explanation got a sympathetic hearing from professional conspiracist Lyndon LaRouche, who promptly produced a half-hour documentary in defense of Sen. Williams. (The senator later expressed "profound gratitude" for LaRouche's support.) Jurors, however, didn't buy it. Williams was convicted on all nine counts brought against him, including bribery and conspiracy. A Senate Ethics Committee inquiry followed, during which a sleeker Robert Bennett, acting as committee counsel, grilled Williams mercilessly. (Bennett was nasty even then: "You are a United States senator, right?" he growled at Williams. "Is that an unfair question?")

Williams's guilt was never seriously in doubt, and he went on to spend two years in prison. Yet it was not until months after Williams was convicted—and close to a year after his role in Abscam was revealed—that Mike McCurry resigned as press secretary. Though he had come to believe that Williams was unfit to be a senator, McCurry later explained, he couldn't bring himself to leave his boss in the middle of a scandal.

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As it turns out, his association with Williams did McCurry little harm. (Not that he bragged about it: One version of his résumé, provided to reporters in 1995 when he took his job at the White House, makes no mention of his five years in Williams's office.) In 1981, McCurry went to work as a spokesman for Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Communications jobs with various other Democratic senators followed, as well as stints with the DNC, a lobbying firm, Bob Kerrey's 1992 presidential campaign, and the State Department. By the time the Monica Lewinsky scandal erupted, McCurry had reached the pinnacle of political flackdom.

A press secretary has at least three constituencies, and after coming to the White House, McCurry came close to satisfying all of them: Regarded as believable by the public, he was simultaneously well-liked by the press and considered indispensable by the politician he worked for. Had he resigned two months ago, McCurry would have been remembered as perhaps the most successful presidential press secretary ever. The problem is, McCurry didn't resign, nor does he seem likely to. If he continues to work for the Clinton administration, Mike McCurry may be remembered as something else entirely.

McCurry, who has three small children, had long planned to leave the White House this year for higher-paying, less-demanding work. Last summer, with departure in mind, McCurry gave a number of candid interviews to *Washington Post* reporter Howard Kurtz for Kurtz's book on the White House's public-relations efforts. The book, *Spin Cycle*, was scheduled to come out this spring, by which time McCurry assumed he'd be well on his way to a new life in corporate communications. In January, however, Kurtz's publisher accelerated the book's release to take advantage of the Lewinsky affair. *Spin Cycle* appeared in bookstores last week, and McCurry—who by that point had announced he was not resigning after all—had to apologize to his boss for some of the things he was quoted as saying. (In one much-reprinted passage from the book, McCurry makes a crude off-the-record joke to reporters about the presidents girlfriends.) It was a humiliating episode, but McCurry believed he had no choice but to stay at the White House. "I don't want to look like a rat leaving a ship that hit an iceberg," he says. "I'm not going to do anything that's going to be interpreted as any lack of faith in the public representation that the president has made."

Mike McCurry

The president's "public representation" of his role in the Monica Lewinsky scandal has of course been conspicuously limited, and from the beginning McCurry has pointedly refused to add to it. During his first post-Lewinsky press briefing, McCurry was asked if he knew what sort of relationship the president *did* have with his intern. "I've not questioned him directly on this matter and don't intend to," McCurry replied. And, by all accounts, he hasn't. Says someone who knows McCurry well: "When [the subject] does come up, Clinton doesn't even say anything to him. He just waves his hand: 'You know what to say.'" Every working day for the past eight weeks, McCurry has responded to Lewinsky questions with the verbal equivalent of a waved hand. "I'm not in the loop," he explains when reporters ask, sometimes a dozen times in a single briefing. "I don't know."

A press secretary who won't answer questions about the most important political news story in recent memory is doing a disservice to at least two of his constituencies, the public and the press. Ordinarily, such stonewalling would create profound resentment in the White House press corps. Yet most reporters still regard McCurry with affection. When it was announced in January that ABC was reassigning Sam Donaldson to the White House beat, there was much speculation among correspondents about how McCurry would handle himself at briefings against the famously combative Donaldson. "All of us were rooting for Mike," says one White House print reporter.

How did McCurry manage to produce the astonishing—perhaps unprecedented—spectacle of White House reporters rooting for a stonewalling administration mouthpiece? Partly because he arrived in the wake of an unpopular predecessor, Dee Dee Myers. "She was horrible," remembers one correspondent, speaking for many of his colleagues. "She liked Clin-

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ton too much to help him. It was like talking to an 8-year-old. And she hated reporters. Now she's married to one. And she's become a commentator. Washington is just too weird." McCurry, by contrast, was much less hostile to the press, and infinitely better informed, particularly on matters pertaining to foreign policy. He increased the number of daily news briefings, called reporters back, often at home, and generally gave straight answers to questions, both on and off the record. Plus, he was witty. Covering the White House can be a crushingly dull job, and just about everyone in the press corps appreciated McCurry's often amusing commentary from the podium.

Only the naïve, however, took McCurry at face value. Beneath his wry coating, McCurry has always been deeply political, a man whose closest allies in the White House were serious operatives like George Stephanopoulos and Harold Ickes. "Mike McCurry is the single most political person I've ever met in my life," says Ann Compton, who has covered the White House for ABC since 1974. "Every word out of his mouth is weighed for what it may mean down the road." McCurry's background comments to reporters frequently sounded more significant than they actually were. "He never actually gives you anything," says a journalist who likes him regardless. A colleague who has worked closely with McCurry at the White House takes an even more cynical view: "He's done a good job making reporters feel important. But it's all jive."

Jive or not, early in the Lewinsky scandal, McCurry's carefully cultivated (and mostly deserved) reputation for candor began to show signs of fraying. In January, McCurry explained to reporters that Clinton's denial of his affair with Gennifer Flowers, as well as the president's admission under oath to a sexual encounter with her, were somehow both true. During the following weeks, McCurry continued to stonewall, referring even the simplest questions about the president's role in the scandal to lawyers who had no intention of answering them, and mocking reporters who dared to press him for more information. Meanwhile, McCurry, who claimed to want nothing to do with the Lewinsky story, repeatedly attacked the independent counsel from the podium. By February, McCurry himself seemed to doubt the veracity of what he was saying. "Maybe there'll end up being a simple, innocent explanation" to the Lewinsky story, he told the *Chicago Tribune* in an unguarded moment. "I don't think so, because I think we would have offered that up already." Despite his doubts, McCurry mounted the podium each day and defended the administration's position. "It's painful to watch," says Compton.

It's sure to get more painful. Why doesn't McCurry resign before the taint from the Lewinsky scandal becomes indelible? "His belief is that it would probably be poor form to leave now," says John Buckley, Bob Dole's communications director in the 1996 presidential campaign and an old friend of McCurry's. "If there is a pause or a lull in the bombing of the president, he could probably more comfortably walk out the door. As soon as there is a graceful time to leave, I hope and pray and rub the belly of my Buddha that he'll be able to get out of there."

A cease-fire is not likely. And so McCurry finds himself in an untenable position: As a press secretary, he must be relatively forthcoming, and yet at this point if he were to be truly forthcoming, he might topple the president. Unsure of how to proceed, McCurry retreats first into spin, and then into ignorance. Reached at his office long after dinnertime, McCurry begins by explaining how the Lewinsky scandal has actually been a good thing for the Clinton administration. "We're doing an awful lot of stuff that people aren't paying attention to," he says. "Conservatives can't get the foam out of their mouths because of this scandal, and they miss all the other efforts that the administration is making to enhance its agenda."

It sounds like a stealthy ploy indeed, and it would be interesting to know what the Clinton agenda is these days, but McCurry doesn't elaborate. Instead, he moves to his stock profession of faith in his boss: "The president has said basically only two things: He said he did not have sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, and he said he did not suggest that anyone should do anything but tell the truth. I believe both of those things, and I believe both of those things will be borne out over time."

Fair enough. But what about all the other questions: What was Lewinsky doing in the Oval Office? What was Vernon Jordan's role? Why the Walt Whitman poems? McCurry has spent the last 13 consecutive hours in scandal management. He sounds tired. "Every American wants to know the truth at the end of the day, and so do I," he says. "But I don't want to be encumbered with a lot of ephemeral information, which is not worth passing on."

Sure. But you're a smart guy. What do *you* think? Don't you ever wake up in the middle of the night and wonder about all the unanswered questions? Don't you want to know? "God, no. No," he says, suddenly sounding very awake. "No, I really don't want to know. I don't know whether that's escapism or whether it's just because knowing the truth means that you have a certain professional obligation to get out there and do your job every day." He pauses, trying to put it into words. "Knowing the truth means that you have to tell the truth."

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Starr's Theory of the Case

by Fred Barnes

President Clinton and his backers aren't shy about trumpeting their version of what independent counsel Kenneth Starr is up to: He's a partisan prosecutor who's out of control, poking into what should be private matters, leaking, and violating constitutional rights, all to bring down the president by unscrupulous means. Even so, Starr hasn't made much headway in pursuing Clinton. After four years, they say, the case still has no theme, no consistent story line. "This investigation started on a 24-year-old real-estate deal and has ended up on a 24-year-old lady, and that's the only common thread between the two," says Rahm Emanuel, a senior Clinton adviser.

Is Emanuel right? You might think so based on Starr's reluctance publicly to provide his own theory of the case against Clinton. But Starr does have one, and it's both coherent and all-encompassing. It can be stated in one word: coverup.

Starr and his team of prosecutors believe that they have encountered a longstanding, comprehensive, White House-directed effort to hide facts and suppress the truth about a whole series of Clinton scandals. The coverup is the story. It's exactly what Emanuel says is lacking in Starr's case: It's the theme, the common thread that runs through every Clinton scandal—Whitewater, Travelgate, Filegate, the White House database, campaign-finance abuses, Paula Jones, Monica Lewinsky. In terms of specific criminal offenses, it involves perjury, witness tampering, conspiracy, and obstruction of justice.

There are recurring patterns in the coverup, Starr believes. Witnesses who protect Clinton (Webb Hubbell, Susan McDougal, even minor witnesses) are rewarded, often with jobs. Those who don't (David Hale, Linda Tripp) are targeted for various forms of retribution. To silence potentially harmful witnesses, the Clinton team tries to steer them to lawyers linked with the president's defense team. And while pledging to cooperate with investigators, Clinton resists them totally, citing privileges that don't apply, failing to comply fully with subpoenas, causing delays. It's what one prosecutor calls "a generalized, full-court stonewall."

This isn't the theory of the case Starr started off with. Initially, his job was to flesh out charges that Clinton cut corners in the Whitewater land deal and used his influence to obtain an illegal $300,000 loan from the Small Business Administration for a business associate. In other words, the case involved financial finagling by a guy who later became president. While these charges were serious, they weren't likely to lead to impeachment. But the coverup is different. Though Starr believes it began before Clinton arrived in Washington, what's significant is that it continues today at full throttle, in connection with civil suits, congressional probes, and Starr's investigation. Oddly enough, Starr's theory of the case is much like independent counsel Lawrence Walsh's in Iran-contra. Walsh thought there was a coverup involving President Reagan in Iran-contra that overshadowed the scandal itself. Starr feels the same about the coverup of

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the Clinton scandals. Walsh failed to prove his theory. Starr, further along than Walsh, is still trying.

In Starr's view, the Lewinsky affair is critical because Clinton's handling of it is so characteristic. His pattern of arranging jobs for persons whose public testimony would be damaging to him goes back to Gennifer Flowers, with whom Clinton now admits he had an affair and for whom he arranged a job in his gubernatorial administration in Arkansas; to state troopers who were offered better jobs for their silence about Clinton's private life; and to Webb Hubbell.

A law partner of Hillary Rodham Clinton, Hubbell took her records from their law firm's files in 1992. Thus, investigators couldn't obtain them from the firm. Several years later, billing records that undermined testimony by Mrs. Clinton mysteriously appeared at the White House. (Starr thinks Hillary had them.) Meanwhile, Hubbell, accused of overcharging clients at the firm, worked out a plea bargain, then failed to give Starr any help in his investigation. At the same time, Hubbell got lucrative legal work with the Lippo Group, Time-Warner, the city of Los Angeles, McAndrews & Forbes, and the Los Angeles-based Consumer Support and Education Fund.

Sean Delonas

Starr's prosecutors contrast Hubbell's good fortune with the fate of David Hale, the ex-judge in Arkansas who testified Clinton spurred the $300,000 SBA loan. Once Hale began cooperating with Starr, he was charged in a state prosecution with lying to insurance regulators. It was highly unusual for a state prosecutor to go after a friendly witness in a federal case. The prosecutor, Mark Stodola, was a friend of Clinton. More recently, Democrats allied with Clinton have pressed a Maryland prosecutor to file charges of wiretapping against Linda Tripp. It was Tripp's tape-recorded conversations with Lewinsky that prompted Starr's latest grand-jury probe.

The Clinton defense team, Starr believes, has been relentless in trying to silence inconvenient witnesses, often by steering Clinton-friendly lawyers to them. Minor witnesses are now represented by some of the most expensive defense lawyers in the country. And these lawyers have reached joint-defense agreements with Clinton's attorneys. This arrangement allows the president's legal team to keep track of what witnesses have told the grand jury. In 1996, an Arkansas judge, Bill Watt, testified that he had lied to a Whitewater witness to persuade him to join Clinton's defense team.

A Starr deputy, Jackie Bennett, asked Watt if he'd tried to recruit the witness, Don Denton, "into the group of people who were resisting cooperation with the independent counsel" and were "teaming up and exchanging information." Watt conceded he had, even mentioning the name of David Kendall to Denton. Kendall is Clinton's personal defense attorney. In another case, a former Democratic National Committee finance chairman, Truman Arnold, told reporters that DNC fundraisers routinely tapped a White House database for names of possible donors. His candor lasted one day. After White House officials conferred with him, he changed his story.

All of this explains why Starr and his aides were so intrigued by Tripp's tapes of her conversations with Lewinsky. In particular, Lewinsky's insistence that Clinton pal Vernon Jordan had sought jobs for her so she wouldn't reveal her affair with the president matched Clinton's practice of arranging employment for potentially damaging witnesses. (Jordan denies he sought to silence her.) The pattern was familiar—and the tapes were the most compelling evidence that Starr had obtained to buttress his theory of a coverup.

Everything Clinton's done post-Lewinsky—stonewalling, trying to rein in troublesome witnesses, assaulting critics, making sure the stories told by people like secretary Betty Currie dovetail with his own—has reinforced Starr's belief in his theory of the case. After all, would Clinton act this way if Starr's theory were wrong?

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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WHAT IF CLINTON WINS?

by David Frum

IS IT WORSE TO MUG AN OLD LADY to raise money for a criminal gang than it is to mug an old lady because you want to buy a case of Dr. Pepper and a box of Moon Pies? If you say yes, you might want to update that résumé: There's a job waiting for you in the Clinton communications office.

Over the past month, the Clinton defenders seem to have worked out a two-tiered defense in the Lewinsky scandal. On network television, spokespersons like the first lady and Rahm Emanuel have insisted that they believe wholeheartedly in the truth of the president's denials. Independent counsel Kenneth Starr's investigation of the president is oppressive, they say, because the president has done nothing wrong.

Sean Delonas

But in settings where they know they are encountering an audience that has been following the Lewinsky matter more closely, the president's defenders have worked out over the past month a less laughable excuse. They do not ask the viewers of CNN or MS-NBC or CNBC or Fox News, or the readers of the op-ed pages of the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, to believe the president. They understand that nobody who follows this case, friend or foe, believes the president. What they argue instead is that the underlying infractions are so petty and personal that no investigation of them should ever have been undertaken. Even if the president did lie, even if he asked Vernon Jordan to hush a witness or Betty Currie to help evade a federal subpoena, the motives for the lie or the witness-tampering or the subpoena-evading deserve forbearance. Nixon's obstruction of justice threatened the constitutional order of the United States; Clinton's threatens only the tranquility of his marriage. The country ought to let it be.

But it is worth asking ourselves this question: What are the consequences of letting it be? If Clinton prevails, what will that mean?

Suppose for a moment that the credible allegations heard over the past few weeks turn out to be true. Suppose the president did indeed perjure himself and, through bribes and threats, secured the perjury of others. Suppose in the Lewinsky affair and in other scandals as well, people who worked for him or for his wife attempted to hide materials under federal subpoena. Suppose the threats that are being made to disclose damaging information about Republicans in Congress turn out to have some connection to the Clinton administration's illegal acquisition of the FBI files of some 900 Republicans. Suppose that when the president's lawyers, the president's friends, and one of the president's lawyer's other clients hired private investigators to spy on the president's enemies, they were acting to serve the president's interests. Suppose—and one does not need an especially suspicious mind to suppose it—that all those things are true. If they are, then what we have here is a near-photocopy of the Watergate scandal, with this one big proviso: The presidential character flaw that set the scandal in motion was lechery rather than paranoia.

Now suppose that, unlike Nixon, Clinton somehow escapes unpunished from the Lewinsky scandal. Ask yourself this: What will that mean for the future of constitutional government in the United States? The answer is that the wrongfulness of presidential perjury, witness-tampering, and obstruction of justice; the wrongfulness of non-cooperation with a lawful federal investigation, the creation of an off-the-books corps of personal presidential spies, and the use of information generated by those spies to attempt to harass and intimidate federal law-enforcement officials—the wrongfulness of all those things will depend on the motives and personality of the president who does them. These deeds will no longer be treated as intrinsically wrong.

If presidential lawbreaking and domestic espionage to cover up paranoiac actions are illegal, but

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presidential lawbreaking and domestic espionage to cover up lecherous actions are not, future presidents will encounter some fascinating legal problems. Suppose a president's vice is avarice. Is that more like lechery (in which case perjury and witness-tampering to cover up the taking of bribes might be okay) or paranoia (in which case they are huge constitutional offenses)? What about alcoholism? Sloth? (Yes, sloth: In last week's *New Yorker*, Jeffrey Toobin tells the following story. Back in 1974, Bill Clinton, then a professor at the University of Arkansas law school, lost an exam paper belonging to his future judge, Susan Webber Wright. Clinton's girlfriend, Hillary Rodham, offered the young Wright a deal: If she would keep quiet about the lost paper, Clinton would give her a B+ in the course. Even ordinary laziness can potentially spawn lying, cheating, and coverups.)

America has of course survived presidential lawlessness in the past. FDR and LBJ had nothing to learn from Bill Clinton about abuse of the FBI and spying on enemies. But the difference this time is that the president has been caught while still in office. If Clinton prevails, he will become the first president to flout the law openly, in sight of the whole country, and survive. It is hard to imagine a more destructive attack on the first principles of republican self-government and the rule of law than that. Which is why, despite the poll numbers, nobody with faith in America should doubt that, in the end, the president must lose.

David Frum is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

WHERE ARE THE REPUBLICANS?

by David Tell

DICK MORRIS CAME TO LUNCH the other day. In the course of explaining why the president's Monica Lewinsky caper is merely a sideshow, he ventured that a "silent plurality" of Americans objects more to having the story forced on its attention than it does to the underlying behavior. But don't a lot of people object to lying, in principle? he was asked. Yes, Morris answered—"but most of them aren't in politics."

Interesting theory. Maybe it's true that political types think it's okay for the president, caught more or less *in flagrante* and in the middle of a subsequent coverup, to issue a blanket denial. Maybe they even think it's okay for him then to deflect any further questions about the matter.

But surely no one thinks it's okay for Bill Clinton to turn loose his entire Praetorian guard of spin-whisperers against the one institution with legal authority to confirm the facts involved: Ken Starr's court-sanctioned investigation. When the White House assaults Starr, after all, it is attempting to delegitimize an almost universally agreed-upon reality. Virtually no one "in politics" thinks Clinton and Lewinsky were comparing stamp collections when they were together—no matter what our judgment of the sex and lying and justice-obstruction. But the White House is fairly shrieking at Ken Starr for trying to prove what we already know. It is saying, in short, that two plus two equals five—and that anybody who raises his hand to complain about this new math is evil.

THE WHITE HOUSE IS SHRIEKING AT KEN STARR FOR TRYING TO PROVE WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW. IT IS SAYING, IN SHORT, THAT TWO PLUS TWO EQUALS FIVE.

We're talking about a truly astonishing, unprecedented level of corruption here: This is ontological subversion. You'd think it would make even politicians uncomfortable. Does it?

Give Democrats a pass on (dubious) grounds of party loyalty. Are Republicans, at least, prepared to offer a voluntary, unambiguous defense of Starr, as America's best hope for an official judgment that two plus two still equals four? A few are. Not all that many, though.

Leading the few are senators John Kyl of Arizona and Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. Kyl was in Bosnia the weekend the anti-Starr crusade reached full boil, when Clinton lawyer David Kendall accused the independent counsel's office, without evidence, of illegally leaking grand-jury material. Kyl got back Sunday night, read the papers, and took to the Senate floor the next day with a long, fierce statement about the integrity of the country's legal system. He felt obliged, he said, "to speak out against those who are deliberately attempting to undermine that process." It was "time to stop attacking Judge Starr," and prosecutors working with Starr "need to be defended."

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McConnell followed Kyl to the Senate floor three days later. McConnell called the Clintonite Starr-bashing "unconscionable" and said it represents a "serious and deeply troubling crisis in our country." McConnell declared himself appalled that a "smear campaign is being orchestrated by the White House," that a "character assassination against the court-appointed independent prosecutor is authorized and approved by the president of the United States." And "it must stop."

Another Republican senator, Fred Thompson of Tennessee, raised the issue at a cattle-call of presumptive presidential candidates in Biloxi, Mississippi, on February 28. He said he thought it was "wise" for Congress thus far largely to have avoided comment on the Lewinsky scandal. But Thompson allowed as how, "if it becomes clear that the White House is intent upon a policy of smearing anyone who questions what they are doing and keeping the facts from the American people," then it would be "time we got off the sidelines." Because "the basic integrity of our government" would depend on it.

Two other GOP presidential hopefuls have at least once spoken in support of Starr. Steve Forbes has given a speech in which he urged that "everyone—independent, Republican, Democrat, conservative, liberal—should say the integrity of the investigation must be allowed." Conservative activist Gary Bauer last week sent a faxed memo to supporters complaining about "the smear campaign" against the independent counsel.

And one other all-but-announced candidate for 2000, Lamar Alexander, has lines in his standard stump speech about how Clinton "must either persuade the nation of his innocence or confess his misdeeds," and how anything less would "fail the essential test of a president." Last week, Alexander acknowledged that he hadn't said much specifically about the assault on Starr. Once asked, though, he didn't hesitate to assert that the behavior of Clinton's adjutants was "brazen" and "frightening." Alexander marvelled that a White House could engage in "a total-war, take-no-prisoners smear campaign against a person with so few consequences" and that the president could "organize a campaign like this against a sworn officer of the government." This sort

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of thing is "brand new, isn't it? I don't recall anything like this happening ever before."

When first contacted for comment, Dan Quayle's office said the former vice president had been "steering clear" of the Starr issue. But his aides then released a couple of sentences that Quayle would be inserting in a speech scheduled for this past weekend. He would criticize the White House for trying to "intimidate a law enforcement team" and would suggest that the president's "real enemy is the truth."

Missouri senator John Ashcroft and former HUD secretary Jack Kemp, each of them also intent on leading the GOP in 2000, haven't kept pace, even with Quayle. Ashcroft's office reported that he hadn't yet addressed the attack on Starr in public and would decline the opportunity to do so for this story. Kemp's press aide said "my inclination is no" when asked whether his boss would be willing to discuss the issue. After checking, he called back to say Kemp, as predicted, would be "unable" to talk about it.

Texas governor George W. Bush leads every Republican preference poll for 2000. Karen Hughes, his communications director, left a friendly phone message explaining that the governor "hasn't said much" about the independent counsel's office to date and thinks "waiting for the facts like everybody else" is the best policy.

Christina Martin, Newt Gingrich's press secretary, said that the speaker "doesn't get asked about it all that often" but has, nevertheless, more than once defended Starr against White House criticism. She cited Gingrich's remarks at the Biloxi cattle call on February 28. In the transcript the speaker's office provided, there is only a single, passing reference to the independent counsel: "I don't want to talk about Ken Starr; I don't want to talk about scandals." Maybe Gingrich hasn't always been so circumspect about the White House siege of the independent counsel's office; still, a search of the Nexis database of news stories comes up dry for relevant quotes.

But Rich Galen, a leading Gingrich lieutenant, has certainly discussed Starr. Starr, Galen has told at least one newspaper, is "the Helen Keller of American politics: he is deaf, dumb, and blind." Galen doesn't think much of the entire Lewinsky controversy, for that matter: "If you got everybody who lied about adultery in this town and put them in jail, you could have any parking space you wanted."

Senate majority leader Trent Lott and Judiciary Committee chairman Orrin Hatch have stoutly backed Starr a couple of times, but only when asked direct questions about Clintonite attempts to undermine the investigation. Sen. Arlen Specter has been characteristically schizophrenic about Starr. He was the first prominent person to reject the latest wave of Democratic attacks on the independent counsel's objectivity, way back on January 27. But Specter has since concluded, on national television, that Starr should never have been chosen to lead the investigation in the first place, since "so many people think he's out to get the president."

Finally, there is the GOP's party apparatus itself, the Republican National Committee. Oddly enough, the RNC, which usually takes its lead from the Hill and not vice versa, has done more than anyone else to defend Starr. The committee's communications wing has sent out a good-sized series of media fact sheets since early February, all of them designed to correct White House falsehoods directed at the independent counsel's office. We have "a responsibility to set the record straight," says RNC communications director Cliff May. But they have to do it rather quietly and delicately, too. "As soon as it looks partisan, you'll hear [the White House] claim it's part of a right-wing conspiracy." Mike Collins, the RNC's press secretary, pointed out that the president's lawyers are eager to "bait everyone" in the GOP into "doing something that makes it look like a partisan investigation." The RNC has "avoided that temptation."

ODDLY ENOUGH, THE RNC, WHICH USUALLY TAKES ITS LEAD FROM THE HILL, HAS DONE MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE TO DEFEND STARR.

May and Collins are honorable fellows, and their worries aren't crazy, and their strategy isn't imprudent. But the fact remains: The president of the United States, through his agents, is maligning an official inquiry into the most important political topic of the day. Representatives of that inquiry are not allowed, by law and custom, to respond in kind. And the media cannot report a response that no one else is making. So the argument is one-sided. And unless more than just a handful of Republicans offer the other side—and more than just occasionally—Americans will get no help making sense of what has happened and understanding what it means.

At issue is whether ordinary Americans will be permitted to obtain an accurate picture of their president's character and behavior. Two plus two really does equal four, you know. Somebody's got to say so with confidence.

David Tell is opinion editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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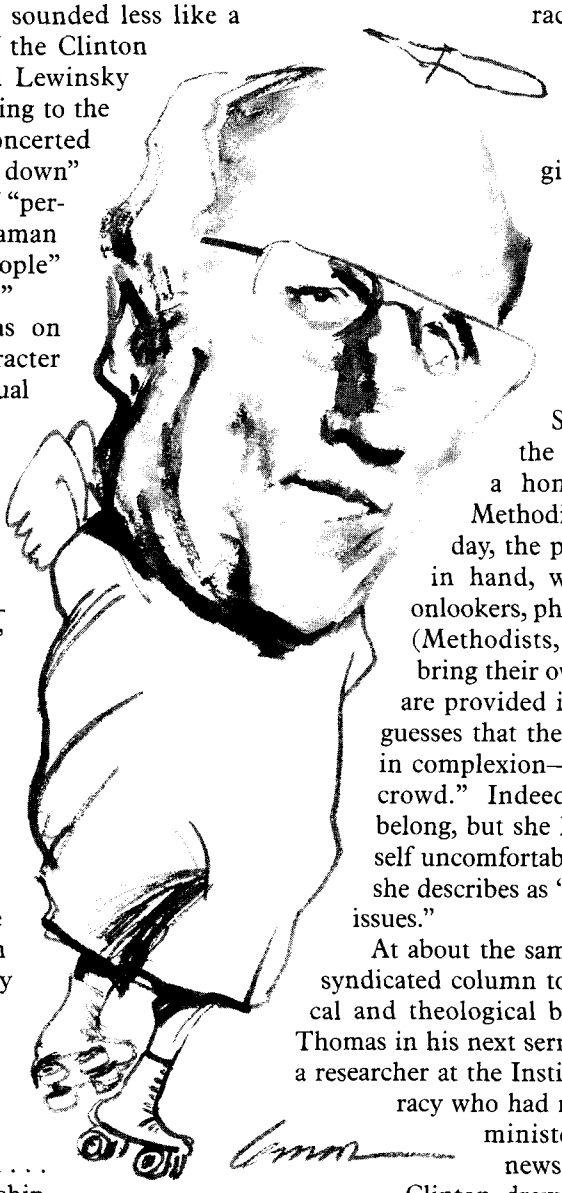
Clinton's Man in the Pulpit

by Jay Nordlinger

Bill and Hillary Clinton have found themselves an awfully sympathetic minister—the Rev. J. Philip Wogaman, who presides at a Methodist church a few blocks from the White House. Wogaman has recently sounded less like a clergyman than a purveyor of the Clinton line. Shortly after the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke, he was complaining to the New York *Daily News* of a "concerted effort to bring [the president] down" and accusing Kenneth Starr of "personal interest and bias." Wogaman hoped that "the American people" would not "succumb to hysteria."

A few weeks later, he was on *Nightline*, explaining that character meant infinitely more than sexual morality: Clinton's "commitments to poor people and to persons of ethnic minorities" were also "issues of character," a fact that those looking at the president "in a more narrow and sometimes more sanctimonious way don't quite catch." Wogaman perceived "deep wellsprings of morality and love" in Clinton and could not imagine that the country would turn on him, saying, "I don't think the American people really want to see him suffer."

Then, only last week, Wogaman gave an interview to the *New York Times*, warning again of an elevation of marital fidelity over other virtues, such as a concern for world peace. He also used the occasion to take another swipe at Starr: "The whole purpose in having a special prosecutor is to ensure that . . . there will be no hint of partisanship or self-interest infecting the professional decisions made." Starr, according to Wogaman, had failed in his duty.



J. Philip Wogaman

Wogaman is clearly delighted to have the Clintons in his flock, and they are equally delighted with him. Wogaman is an ethicist of some renown and a veteran political enthusiast. As his friend and congregation member George McGovern says, the reverend is "interested in the whole of society; he does not compartmentalize." Wogaman has been a faithful advocate of nationalized health care, environmentalism, gay marriage, the power of labor unions, and what may roughly be called social democracy. Of legal abortion—even the partial-birth variety—he is a firm defender. He is a founder of a group dedicated to countering the religious Right. And, when it comes to the Scriptures, he is an interpreter of startling elasticity. In short, Wogaman may be the most Clinton-friendly pastor in all of Christendom.

Bill Clinton is a lifelong Southern Baptist—his wife is the Methodist—but he has found a home at Wogaman's Foundry Methodist Church. On a typical Sunday, the president arrives with a Bible in hand, which he waves at cheering onlookers, photographers, and TV cameras. (Methodists, however, ordinarily do not bring their own Bibles. At Foundry, Bibles are provided in the pew racks.) McGovern guesses that the congregation is "Republican in complexion—an older, more conservative crowd." Indeed, Elizabeth Dole used to belong, but she left in 1994 after finding herself uncomfortable with the church over what she describes as "a wide range of philosophical issues."

At about the same time, Cal Thomas used his syndicated column to publicize Wogaman's political and theological beliefs. Wogaman denounced Thomas in his next sermon, along with Mark Tooley, a researcher at the Institute on Religion and Democracy who had made a thorough study of the minister's career. In a subsequent newspaper article, Wogaman, à la Clinton, drew a connection between the terrorist bombing in Oklahoma City and "corrosive words and destructive actions": "People in the media don't plant bombs. But if they plant hatred and division, doesn't that affect the behavior of unstable hearers or readers?" As for the Doles (Bob had attended occasionally with Elizabeth), Wogaman "grieved over their departure—I have to confess that. I thought it

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would have been wonderful . . . to have both candidates worshiping together."

In many ways, Wogaman is a model of the contemporary mainline clergyman. He was born in 1932, the son of a midwestern minister and his wife. An eager student, he distinguished himself at the College of the Pacific and Boston University's theology school, which he entered months after Martin Luther King had left. In 1964, he ran for the California legislature on the Democratic ticket, losing, but securing a place on the Democratic State Central Committee, where he stayed for two years.

Thereafter, he devoted himself to teaching, writing, and political causes. He marched with King in the South and protested the Vietnam War in Washington ("I still remember being tear gassed . . . near Lafayette Park"). He was not exactly a Cold Warrior, writing in 1967, "The U.S.S.R. is characteristic of the more tolerant Communist arrangements for religion," and, "It is highly questionable whether Christians in Russia or China are treated any worse than Marxists are treated in the United States." In 1974, he authored a pamphlet defending the Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe* v. *Wade*: "It will do no good to argue that it is possible to affirm the sanctity of life in the presence of even the most miserable of circumstances. . . . That is romantic sentimentality." Wogaman also cautioned against "a theological over-valuing of early embryonic life," opining that "abortion may be faithful obedience to the God of life and love."

Throughout the '70s and '80s, Wogaman taught at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, eventually becoming its dean. (Ken Starr, incidentally, sits on the seminary's board.) Wogaman also increased his reputation as a theologian-radical—joining Jesse Jackson, Harvey Cox, and the Berrigan brothers in blasts against Israel, serving as chairman of an infant-formula task force, and so on. All the while, he was pushing the frontiers of the sexually permissible, claiming, for example, that "it is quite possible that some people have . . . received considerable human fulfillment and enhancement of self-esteem on the basis of short, never-to-be-repeated sexual encounters" (which laymen refer to as "one-night stands"). He was also casting a pox on both "Marxist communism" and "laissez-faire capitalism," judging them "not suitable" for "Christian economic thinking," but counting capitalism as the greater offender against the environment.

It was in 1992 that Wogaman left Wesley and assumed the pulpit of Foundry Methodist (which had dismissed its previous minister for sexual indiscretions with church members). When Bill Clinton fought off "bimbo eruptions" during the Democratic primaries, Wogaman spoke up for him, pointing out that the governor and his wife had remained married, which was "not unimportant." Wogaman made no apologies for his forays into politics: "To ignore the issues would be a dereliction of duty." Did Scripture require universal access to health care? Yes, just as Jesus fed the *entire* multitude, not merely a portion of it. In 1994, Wogaman helped launch the Interfaith Alliance, hoping to offset the influence of Pat Robertson and other conservatives. Two years later, he signed a letter in support of partial-birth abortion, agreeing that "none of us . . . can discern God's will as well as the woman herself."

Wogaman has been particularly emphatic in his embrace of gays—their right to be ordained as ministers, their right to marry. The national Methodist church maintains that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching," but Wogaman has made Foundry a "reconciling church," meaning that it looks with favor on gay relationships and marriages. A year ago, he lent his name to a "statement of conscience" arguing that "to withhold rituals of support for committed relationships is unconscionable." "A lot of good people have been injured by the church," he told a reporter, "and it's time we called attention to that."

Wogaman is a devoted left-liberal, but he is no flake: His writings and conversation exhibit a wide-ranging intelligence, solid learning, and—for the most part—fair-mindedness toward his adversaries. He is a modern-day proponent of the old Social Gospel, which George McGovern locates at "the heart of the Christian message." McGovern contends that Wogaman, while in robes, "never says anything partisan, never gets into specific political actions." Still, the reverend finds it hard to resist the political arena, dashing off a column, for instance, on the desirability—on the *morality*—of portraying Franklin Roosevelt seated in a wheelchair.

For Clinton, he is perfect. The president no doubt sits comfortably as Wogaman preaches. In a 1994 interview, Clinton said that Christianity "frees you of all the guilt that you would otherwise carry around from all the mistakes you make. I mean, the important thing to me about my life and my faith is that every day I get to get up and try again"—because "the God I believe in is a God of second chances." Wogaman surely concurs, being—as he and his admirers constantly avow—"non-judgmental."

Yet Wogaman is not completely without severity, not completely unwilling to condemn. Starr's taping of Monica Lewinsky at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel? That, Wogaman insists, was "a moral outrage."

Jay Nordlinger is associate editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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The Joy of Sport-Utility Vehicles

Why the Government Hates What Consumers Love

By Irwin M. Stelzer

"When a rock hits a glass, it is bad for the glass." So advises an ancient folk saying. "When a big car hits a small car, it's bad for the small car." So advises the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The ancients knew intuitively that it is better to be a rock than a glass when an unplanned meeting occurs. The government has spent millions of dollars and deliberately crashed thousands of cars into one another to discover that big cars are safer than small cars—yet then it concludes that Americans should all drive small cars. Ancients 1, government 0 in the logic game.

Let me declare an interest, as Britain's parliamentarians say: My mother was killed in an automobile accident, rear-ended when her car stopped because of a flat tire. So I put a high priority on safety. So does my wife. We spend a good deal of time in snowy and hilly Colorado. Although I wouldn't be caught off-road—even off-Broadway gives me pause—I own one of the new breed of 4-wheel-drive behemoths known as sport-utility vehicles. My Ford Explorer weighs in at 4,100 pounds, some 50 percent above the weight of the average car. My wife owns the largest vehicle that will fit in our garage, a Chevy Tahoe, which at a curb weight of 4,800 pounds dripping wet is considerably more than half again as heavy as the average car. Although not insensitive to the stylishness of these vehicles, we bought them primarily for the safety that weight and superior visibility convey.

Over the past two decades, millions of Americans have made the same choice. And a significant slice of the federal regulatory apparatus has recoiled in horror. The bureaucratic hostility to this quite reasonable shift in consumer habits shows Washington regulators at their worst, digging in their heels and asserting—contrary to the facts—their supposed moral superiority over the consumer hordes.

The brawl over sport-utility vehicles began in the 1970s when the government decided that Americans were using too much gasoline and that the best way to stop this wanton waste of a scarce resource, oil, was to order manufacturers to produce more fuel-efficient cars. Car-makers discovered that they had to reduce the weight of the vehicles they were producing to comply with the new order—which they proceeded to do, with two consequences, one intended, one quite unintended. The intended consequence was to cut gasoline consumption; the unintended one was to force Americans into cars that have proved to be less safe than the big buggies that so offended Washington policymakers.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the small-car heaven that environmentalists and their political allies intended us to enter. Two funny things, actually. First, the threatened shortage of oil that regulators used as their excuse for imposing fuel-efficiency standards turned into a worldwide glut that has driven the price of gasoline below that of Perrier water. Second, Americans decided in increasing numbers that they don't like squeezing their families into small, flimsy cars, especially with gasoline increasingly affordable. With the supply of large cars artificially restricted by the federal fuel-efficiency regulations, consumers turned to the more open market of sport-utility vehicles, full-sized pickup trucks, small pickups, minivans, and full-sized vans. In 1996, all of these types of vehicles (known as LTVs in bureaucratic argot) accounted for more than 43 percent of all passenger-vehicle sales. As a result of their increasing popularity, LTVs now account for 34 percent of all passenger-vehicle registrations in the country, up from 20 percent in 1980.

As our ancient sage could have predicted, the popularity of pickups and minivans and sport-utility vehicles is bad news for small cars. These new cruisers of America's roads and off-roads weigh some 900 pounds more than the average passenger car. Moreover, they sit higher on the road; when they collide with lighter and lower passenger cars, they tend to hit them in

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places where the passengers of the smaller cars are relatively unprotected. The result, says the NHTSA, is that "traffic crashes between an LTV and any other light vehicle now account for a majority of fatalities in vehicle-to-vehicle collisions."

So the statistics show. In 1996, 41,207 people died in traffic accidents, 35,579 of them within their vehicles. Crashes between LTVs and cars resulted in 5,259 fatalities. Of these, 81 percent, or 4,260 fatalities, occurred in the cars. Clearly, the passengers in the larger vehicles came out ahead. But that doesn't make the LTVs the villains of the piece. Because it's not just the mismatch in size that makes cars less safe. Fatal crashes between two cars caused 4,013 deaths, while LTV-LTV crashes resulted in far fewer fatalities: 1,225. Even if we correct for the difference in the numbers of each type of vehicle on the road, it seems obvious that if everyone drove an LTV, far fewer bodies would be hauled off the nation's highways every year.

Yet, regulatory antipathy to LTVs mounts. This, even though the number of fatalities from auto accidents is not primarily a function of the type of vehicle involved in the crash. For that proposition we have the word of no less an expert than the administrator of the NHTSA himself. Ricardo Martinez told the *Washington Post*, "We have about 12 million vehicle crashes annually in this country, and by far the most serious of those—the fatals—involve one form or another of high-risk driver behavior." Such high-risk behavior includes everything from disregarding traffic lights and driving under the influence of alcohol, to failing to buckle up properly. Indeed, Jim Hall, chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, estimates that 64 percent of the 35,579 passengers who died in their vehicles after crashes were either unbelted or improperly belted. All in all, the NHTSA estimates that every dollar it invests in changing driver behavior produces six times greater benefits than a dollar invested in vehicle-crash protection.

Nevertheless, the regulators are in full cry against sport-utility vehicles, minivans, and pickups, demanding that millions be invested in their redesign to make them lower and lighter, and that they be subjected to the same fuel-efficiency standards that have forced down the weight and safety of cars. In short, regulators want to make LTVs less safe and more like the cars that their owners have rejected.

Among these eager regulation-writers, astonishingly, is the NHTSA, which thereby belies the very mission—highway-traffic safety—encoded in its name. Safety, it would seem, is not the real goal of the anti-LTV crowd. Indeed, in their jointly produced "Buying a Safer Car," the NHTSA, the American Automobile Association, and the Federal Trade Commission advise, "Crash data show that heavy vehicles offer more protection than light vehicles with the same safety equipment, particularly in two-vehicle crashes." The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which conducts crash tests for the insurance industry, agrees: "The laws of physics dictate that, all else being equal, larger and heavier vehicles are safer than smaller and lighter ones." And a joint study by Harvard University and the Brookings Institution concluded that the 500-pound per car downsizing forced upon the industry by government-mandated fuel-efficiency standards translates into 2,200 to 3,900 additional traffic deaths per model year.

Yet the thrust of regulatory policy remains one of discouraging the production and purchase of large, safe cars and squeezing more and more Americans into small, less safe vehicles. The very language used by the NHTSA is instructive. It titles its studies of the consequences of crashes of different types of vehicles, "The Aggressivity of Light Trucks and Vans in Traffic Crashes." According to the highway agency, the "aggressive" LTVs are "fundamentally incompatible with cars in highway crashes" because they "are heavier, of more rugged construction, and have higher ground clearance than the passenger cars with which they share the road." Consider another, equally accurate way of stating the problem. The study might be entitled, "The Vulnerability of Small Cars in Traffic Crashes." These "vulnerable" cars, it might be said, "are lighter, of flimsier construction, and have lower ground clearance" than LTVs, and are therefore "fundamentally incompatible with the larger, safer vehicles with which they share the road."

But truth-in-advertising is not what the auto regulators are all about. If they were really interested in steering people into safer vehicles, argues John D. Graham, director of the Harvard University Center for Risk Analysis, regulators would provide consumers with safety ratings. He writes, "The sticker price on a new car includes the mileage rating, but there is no safety rating. . . . Consumers are told nothing about the safety risks of smaller, lighter cars, even though the government has the legal authority to design a safety rating system for new vehicles." And, he might well have added, even though buried in the NHTSA's own study of so-called "vehicle aggressivity" is the finding that "larger cars are more crashworthy than smaller cars."

Indeed, if safety really troubled the regulators, they would scrap fuel-efficiency standards and press manu-

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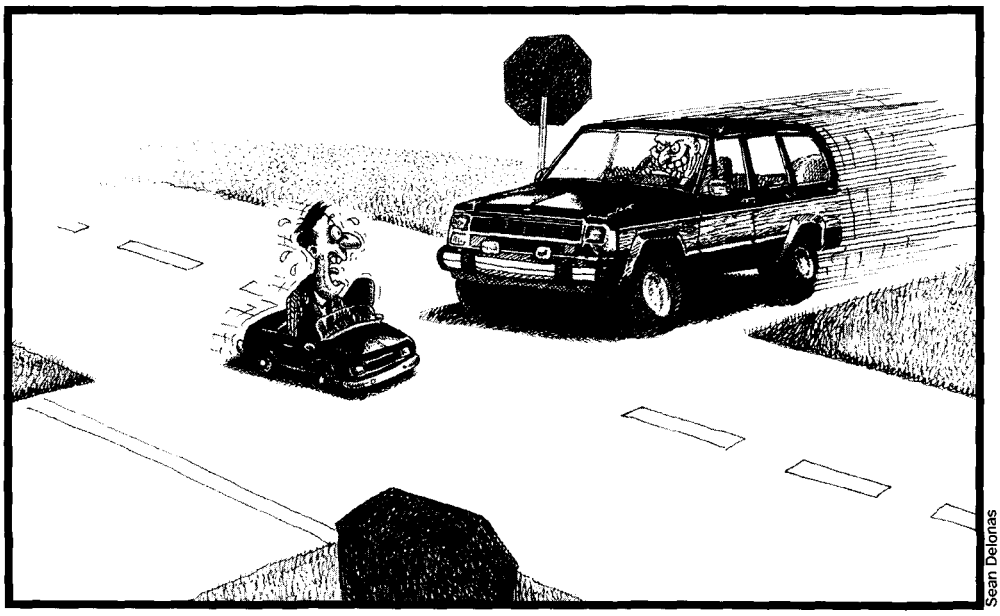
facturers to produce more heavy cars. But they won't. So what is really bothering them? Surely not a worry that the world is running out of oil with which to keep these big cars rolling on America's highways. True, environmentalists and varied anti-growth activists have been warning for some time that the world will soon suck out all of the oil God put in the earth. But the fact is that the world is awash in oil. Supplies are so ample they are driving the price of oil down to levels that make it increasingly foolish to spend lives to save gallons, as the government does when it artificially restricts the availability of heavy cars on the market.


Sean Delonas

If not safety, and not oil conservation, perhaps the new urge to prevent global warming lies behind the antipathy to LTVs. After all, in his apocalyptic *Earth in the Balance*, Vice President Al Gore designates "the unrestrained burning of cheap fossil fuels" as one of the villains in the "deteriorating global environment."

Unfortunately for those who purport to base their hostility to LTVs, and especially to sport-utility vehicles, on environmental grounds, the data don't provide them much comfort. In his recently published *Driving America* (AEI Press), James Johnston, an AEI scholar and former auto-industry executive, analyzes government data on the sources of the carbon-dioxide emissions that are said to contribute to global warming. He concludes that if all gasoline-burning cars, vans, sport-utility vehicles, and light pickup trucks were removed from the roads in America, worldwide carbon-dioxide emissions from all sources would be reduced by eighteen one-hundredths of one percent, and from man-made sources by 4 percent, "hardly a significant step in rolling back carbon dioxide." And motor vehicles contribute an even smaller portion of water vapor, supposedly the most threatening of the greenhouse gases. "[T]his means that programs that would require further reduction in size and weight of motor vehicles to increase fuel economy would have no real effect on the global climate but would further erode the safety provided by larger, heavier vehicles," concludes Johnston.

Lest you think that Johnston's former affiliation with the auto industry colors his judgment, consider the conclusion of Robert W. Crandall, the Brookings Institution scholar who is one of the nation's most highly regarded students of the regulatory process. "To attempt to control global warming by reducing fuel consumption in new U.S. light-duty vehicles is not only inefficient; it is futile." Crandall goes on to call for an end to regulations mandating increases in fuel efficiency; the vehicle-weight reductions those rules require kill several thousand people every year, "a terrible price for an ill-conceived economic policy."

Which brings us to the real reasons that regulators want to curb big vehicles. Start with the fact that sport-utility vehicles, pickups, and other LTVs are, after all, instruments of personal mobility. You go where you want to go, whenever you want to go there if you own your own set of wheels—a fact that has not been lost on the nation's teenagers ever since the motor car became ubiquitous. Contrast this with the mass-transit facilities so beloved of liberals and city planners. The central authority determines the spot at which you may begin your journey, the place at which you may end it, and the schedule on which you may proceed. It also determines how much money will be spent on the transportation facility, whether it is to have amenities such as air conditioning, and what you will pay to use it. And it has the warm glow that comes to the heart of a left-leaning bureaucrat from the fact that everyone is equal: No more Mercedes for the rich and Chevy Geo Metros for the poor; instead, a one-

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class subway strap for all. When it turns out that you prefer your car to a planner's mass transit, the central authority responds by taxing your car and using taxpayer funds to subsidize its pet, mass transit.

This liberal antipathy to the car is in marked contrast to conservatives' fondness for it. Liberals see the car as an instrument of destruction, destroying lives in accidents, communities because of the required highway construction (a waste of funds that they feel could better be used to finance the welfare state), and the environment.

Al Gore tells us that "the wild things" are forced to flee from construction sites: "Most of the deer were hit by cars." Paul Kennedy, in his bestselling *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century*, says it is difficult and costly to cut emissions of carbon dioxide from factories. But that matters little, for "the real issue is the need to cut emissions by vehicle engine combustion," a goal he would accomplish with the usual list of liberal measures: stiff rises in gasoline prices, still-higher taxes on "gas-guzzling" automobiles, and more investment in mass transit.

The World Resources Institute goes even further. "We can no longer assume it is our God-given right to drive, alone, anywhere we please." Instead of the freedom of the road, we are to live in high-density urban developments "where walking, bicycling, and public transportation are both possible and enjoyable."

Contrast this with the conservative view of the automobile. George Will extols what he calls "the virtues of automobility. . . . An open road produces an open society. The automobile has been an emancipating device. . . . Were Huck [Finn] to light out for the territories today, he would go in a Ford Explorer. . . . In the land of the automobile, every man's a king."

Not only do sport-utility vehicles represent the sort of personal mobility that is anathema to big-government advocates (the vehicles' little-used but nevertheless available off-road capability makes them independent even of highways). They are, well, big. Bigger than government bureaucrats think they need to be. Here we run into a long-standing characteristic of government bureaucrats, the sumptuary mentality. Since as early as 500 B.C., governments have been passing laws to restrict private consumption, to prevent what the authorities see as extravagance in dress, entertainment, and food consumption, by regulating everything from the amount of gold thread in a garment to the number of chickens that might be consumed at a feast.

It was not so long ago that Jimmy Carter promulgated a set of rules telling us how high we might set our thermostats in the winter, and how low in the summer, and decided that we did not need hot water in washrooms in federally operated facilities such as airports. "Owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning," he said, presaging the day when government would decide that we must buy toilets that use what proves to be an insufficient amount of water to flush away the consequences of our excessive consumption.

So too with big sport-utility vehicles. Bureaucrats are quick to sneer that their off-road capability is rarely used by the suburban moms who increasingly favor them and that they are grotesquely large for most of the uses to which they are put. Never mind that the very characteristics that so offend the anti-sport-utility crowd are what attracts consumers—the safety inherent in vehicle weight, the better road visibility inherent in the higher-riding vehicles, the improved bad-weather roadability of four-wheel-drive vehicles, and not least the sheer fun of playing macho-truck-driver-cum-western-rancher. Fun, alas, is not a variable that bureaucrats include in their regulatory equations.

BUREAUCRATS SNEER THAT THE VEHICLES' OFF-ROAD CAPABILITY IS RARELY USED BY THE SUBURBAN MOMS WHO INCREASINGLY FAVOR THEM.

So the feds are putting pressure on the automakers to change the design of light trucks, sport-utility vehicles, and vans to reduce the effects they have on smaller cars when collisions occur. Do so voluntarily, says the NHTSA, or we will promulgate regulations to force you to do so.

In response to this pressure, some manufacturers are incorporating into the design of new vehicles such changes as lower bumpers, less rigid frames, and lighter components—risking, according to some experts, the safety of the vehicles' occupants in order to make them more "compatible" with the less safe, smaller cars the government has forced on the American driver. Other car-makers want to stiffen the sides of passenger cars, to reduce the impact of collisions with larger vehicles, but they hesitate because the added weight would increase fuel consumption. And that would upset government regulators, who remain committed to saving unprecious fuel at the expense of precious lives. ♦

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And Puerto Rico Makes 51?

By Matthew Rees

The symbolism couldn't have been worse: At a March 3 press conference devoted to a House bill on Puerto Rico's future, a reporter asked whether the congressmen could give some of their answers in Spanish, for the benefit of the Spanish-language media. Rep. Jose Serrano, a Puerto Rican-born Democrat who up to that point had mostly stayed mum, proceeded to deliver a lengthy speech, all of it in Spanish. Puerto Rico's non-voting House representative, Carlos Romero-Barcelo, did the same. Even Rep. Patrick Kennedy gave a short statement in tortured *gringo* Spanish, eliciting chuckles from the heavily bilingual crowd.

All the while, English-only reporters were growing fidgety over their inability to understand. And Alaska Republican Don Young was plainly irritated, checking his watch and pacing nervously. Young is the chief sponsor of the bill, which would allow Puerto Rico to hold a nonbinding referendum on whether to remain a territory, apply for statehood, or declare independence. As his colleagues droned on, Young left no doubt that he wanted the speechifying to end as quickly as possible.

The press conference underscored the Republican party's clumsy efforts to woo Hispanic voters. Puerto Rico was under discussion in the first place only because Newt Gingrich had scheduled a vote on Young's bill, in part because the speaker had become convinced that this was a way to lure Hispanics to the GOP.

In the end, however, all but 43 Republicans voted *against* the bill on March 4. For one thing, they feared that Puerto Rico would become America's 51st state. The bill still passed—by a single vote—but it will prove an empty victory: The Senate isn't going to act anytime soon, Hispanics are no more inclined to support Republicans, and the whole affair renewed charges from some House Republicans that Gingrich and the rest of the GOP leadership have no agenda other than that which will please lobbyists and pollsters.

The Puerto Rico bill was the culmination of many years' work by Young, chairman of the House Resources Committee. Last May, the Alaskan twisted arms to deliver a 44-1 committee vote in favor of his proposal. But GOP leaders balked when Young urged that the bill be scheduled for a vote by the full House. Young then waged a furious lobbying campaign, buttonholing Republican House leaders at every opportunity. His relentlessness paid off, as Gingrich agreed last year that a vote would be held sometime in 1998.

But once a vote was scheduled, a few Republicans started noisily opposing the measure. Rep. Gerald Solomon, the Rules Committee chairman, put forward an amendment requiring that English be enshrined as Puerto Rico's official language before the island could be admitted as a state. (The amendment was defeated, and a softer English-language requirement was passed in its place.)

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, a former Reagan speechwriter, employed an even more clever strategy to tap into language-related fears about Puerto Rico: He distributed a series of letters to his colleagues printed in English *and* Spanish, spelling out his objections to the Young bill. With still other Republicans, like conservative representative Dan Burton, supporting the measure, Gingrich tried to delay consideration of the vote. But the speaker was told by his leadership colleagues that he had made a pledge to bring up the bill and should stick to his word.

Once the vote was scheduled, a massive advocacy campaign was undertaken by supporters and opponents of the measure alike. Nearly all the major Washington lobbyists were involved, as could be seen in the pages of the *Washington Times*. In the days leading up to the vote, the conservative daily was flooded with full-page ads from an array of interest groups. On the day of the vote itself, the Puerto Rican government had a special 20-page advertising section inserted into the paper, designed to win favor for Young's bill. Congressional aides said it was one of the most energetic and expensive lobbying campaigns undertaken since Republicans won control of Congress in 1994.

The impression that the Young bill was being driven as much by lobbyists as by genuine concerns about Puerto Rico's relationship to the United States

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alienated many Republicans. But the more frequently heard complaint concerned the apparent dithering of House GOP leaders. "It would have been fine to bring this up as part of a larger agenda," said Rep. David McIntosh, an Indiana conservative. "But without such an agenda, doing this is like Clinton doing gays in the military during his first days as president. It defines your entire agenda." Rep. Charles Canady, also an energetic conservative, echoed McIntosh: "To single this out for action when we're not doing much else sends a message that this is a priority."

Among those peddling the idea that support for the Puerto Rican referendum would impress Hispanic voters were two of the GOP's leading consultants: Frank Luntz and Ralph Reed. While Reed, the former executive director of the Christian Coalition, was out of town the day of the vote, his endorsement of the proposal was featured in advertising campaigns. Luntz was a more controversial figure, walking the halls of Congress and identified as having influenced Gingrich's thinking on the subject. (Luntz's 222-page communications manifesto recommends a vote on Puerto Rican statehood as a way to win Hispanics.) Yet the bill's opponents, and even a few supporters, noted that Luntz was hardly an impartial observer, citing his status as a paid consultant for the governor of Puerto Rico.

The divisions within the Republican ranks were such that while Gingrich was one of the bill's cosponsors, he barely lifted a finger to rally support for it. Similarly, the Republican National Committee took no position on the matter, and one of the House GOP's research offices released a fact sheet on the bill that carefully danced around the question of whether to support it.

President Clinton has signaled his support for the bill, but one considerable obstacle remains: the Senate. Paul Coverdell, a Republican from Georgia, has threatened a filibuster if the bill is scheduled for a vote, and others would likely join him. Trent Lott of Mississippi, the Senate majority leader, hasn't expressed much enthusiasm for the bill, and it may not see the light of day this year. But skeptics have noted there's one reason that Lott might want to press Puerto Rico's case: If "The Star of the Caribbean" became a state, Mississippi would no longer bear the dubious distinction of being the poorest state in the union. ♦

Teacher Unions: Two Is Bad Enough, One Is Worse

By Myron Lieberman

The merger of the nation's two giant teacher unions is very likely to be approved at their national conventions in New Orleans this July. The combined entity, as yet unnamed, will be the largest union in the AFL-CIO and a powerful political player.

Yet the consequences are easy to underestimate. The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, after all, have so many similarities that their merger doesn't seem to change much. Both have been all-out supporters of the Democratic party: One of every nine delegates to the Democratic national conventions that nominated the Clinton-Gore ticket in 1992 and 1996 was a member of the NEA or AFT, and former union staff members hold key positions in the Democratic party and the Clinton administration. In addition, the two unions hold similar, if not identical, positions on economic and social issues as well as on education policy. In fact, the merger, by making plain how much they have in common, should dispel the naive idea that the AFT is a good union, while the NEA are the bad guys.

Consider the sheer number of bodies and dollars involved. Currently, the two unions enroll about 3.2 million members, of whom about 2.6 million are regular classroom teachers. The unions' revenues at all levels exceed $1.3 billion (excluding their PAC funds,

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foundations, and special-purpose organizations). In political campaigns, few if any organizations can provide as much in-kind help as the teacher unions; indeed, the Democrats often use teacher-union offices as their campaign headquarters. In most states, the work year for teachers is 180 days or less, and their work day is six to seven hours including lunch. As a result, teachers tend to have more time than others for telephone banks, demonstrations, mailing lists, transportation to the polls, and the other nitty-gritty tasks of political campaigns.

Although NEA and AFT membership figures include hundreds of thousands of retirees and others who pay minimal dues, a merger will probably lead to increased membership of full-time employees, not limited to teachers; at least, that has been the experience in state and local mergers to date. Furthermore, the merger will undoubtedly lead independent public-sector unions, such as the 170,000-member California School Employees Association, to affiliate with the AFL-CIO. The reason is that the AFL-CIO operates under a no-raiding policy, which bars affiliates from attempting to organize members of other AFL-CIO affiliates. Currently, hundreds of thousands of public employees are in independent unions. As long as they remain outside the AFL-CIO, rival unions in the federation can threaten to raid their ranks; affiliation with the AFL-CIO would preclude this outcome.

The upshot is that, not only will the newly merged teacher union dwarf others in the labor federation, but unions representing perhaps a million or more additional state and local public employees will also join. Public-sector unions will soon comprise over half of AFL-CIO membership. These unions are adamantly opposed to smaller government, lower taxes, privatization—any policy that limits government programs or expenditures. To anyone concerned about union participation in the 1996 elections, I would say, You ain't seen nothin' yet.

It is important to underscore, in this context, that teacher unions, like public-sector unions generally, are political by their very nature. Private-sector unions achieve concessions by exerting economic pressure on employers; while they may be active politically, their collective-bargaining operations are separate from their political activity. For teacher unions, however, bargaining means pressing school boards and other elected officials for concessions; the distinction between bargaining and political activity disappears, and the entire organization is geared to political action.

In the overwhelming majority of state capitals, the teacher unions, especially the NEA, are among the two or three most powerful interest groups. The NEA and AFT employ more than 6,000 people, over half of whom are paid $100,000 or more in salaries and benefits. The union field representatives who negotiate contracts do not perform this activity year round; they negotiate multi-year contracts, then devote themselves to their primary activity: politics. In fact, even on very conservative assumptions, the NEA and AFT employ more full-time political operatives than the Democratic and Republican parties combined. The merger will add to this critical mass and facilitate its strategic and tactical deployment.

As for the effects on teachers, in some ways at least, teachers will be worse off as a result of the merger. First, teachers are consumers of representational services; unions are producers of them. Like any other consumers, teachers are better served if producers compete—if teachers can choose between rival unions. Like other would-be monopolists, NEA and AFT leaders loudly decry the destructive, wasteful effects of competition, though their protests are hardly credible. They do not seek to hold their officers accountable for the alleged waste, and in reality they haven't competed very hard for years.

But even more discouraging than the merger itself is the passivity with which conservatives are greeting it. The merger presents a unique opportunity to persuade hundreds of thousands of teachers to leave the NEA/AFT—and join a more congenial union, if one existed. Many teachers dislike the idea of affiliation with the AFL-CIO (the AFT has always belonged to the AFL-CIO, but the NEA is not a member). That is one reason the merger agreement provides for affiliation with the AFL-CIO at the national level but does not compel state and local unions to affiliate. Many teachers are put off (or would be if they knew about it) by the influence of the gay and lesbian caucuses in both unions, the NEA's ethnic and gender quotas, the overwhelming Democratic tilt of their PACs, and the lush compensation for union staff, to mention only a few issues that would make a less expensive union without these drawbacks attractive. Conservatives should be working to create alternative representation for teachers.

Instead, they are playing into the hands of the teacher unions. Their proposals to weaken teacher tenure, or institute merit pay, or authorize a few charter schools, illustrate the point: These are worthy but secondary objectives that merely drive more teachers into the arms of the NEA and AFT. Meanwhile, legislation that would weaken the unions and would actually enjoy considerable teacher support is overlooked. For instance, the teacher unions are generally not

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required to meet the minimal reporting and disclosure standards that apply to private-sector unions. Rank-and-file members cannot find out how much the staff and officers of their own union receive in total compensation or whether conflicts of interest exist in the union's awarding of contracts. A "Teacher Right To Know" law would receive substantial support from teachers and would help curb some of the worst abuses that currently prevail. As matters stand, however, we are likely to see the emergence of a 4-million-member coalition of state and local public employees with a formidable anti-conservative presence in every political jurisdiction in the United States. It's an unpleasant prospect, but one that grows more likely every day. ♦

Mancur Olson's Legacy

By David Brooks

Mancur Olson died last month, but I confess there was a time when I thought he'd been dead for centuries. I was taking a freshman course at the University of Chicago. Our reading list winter quarter included Aristotle's *Politics*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Locke's *Treatises*, Burke's *Reflections*—and a book by Mancur Olson called *The Logic of Collective Action.* When a writer is in such company, you assume that he's long since passed into some pantheon. So it was something of a shock when I learned that Olson was still kicking, and still producing books.

In fact, Mancur Olson (it's pronounced "mansir") was at the time in the middle of a distinguished career in the economics department of the University of Maryland. He was born in 1932 on a farm in North Dakota, and he retained in his writing a spare and precise tone appropriate to his upbringing. There is little artful narration in his books, but once he got started on a train of thought, he pursued it with mathematical rigor to the very end.

I'm sure he would never have claimed that *The Logic of Collective Action*, which was published in 1965, belonged up there with Aristotle and Hobbes, but it was a useful book to assign to college freshmen because it takes an obvious feature of the landscape and makes you think about it very hard. Olson was writing at a time when many scholars and laymen assumed that people have an instinct to join groups. If all the members of a particular group have a common interest, it was then assumed, they will pursue that interest. Folks get together in different factions, and the result is interest-group democracy.

Olson argued, however, that joining groups is rational, not instinctive; forming groups is hard, not easy; and keeping groups together is problematic. For example, individuals in a group have an interest in seeing their group succeed, but they also have an interest in not paying the costs that lead to success. It would be nice if the Anti-Tax League reduced my tax burden. But it's not worth it for me to send in $250 to the Anti-Tax League, because that money would actually make very little difference to the whole cause, while the benefits, if the organization succeeds in reducing tax rates, will accrue to me whether I donate or not. Olson pointed out that small groups, on the other hand, don't have as much of a free-rider problem. They find it easier to remain focused and active than large groups, which tend to fall apart unless the leaders are able to coerce the members. The result in the real world is that when small groups go up against big diffuse groups, the small groups often win. The arugula growers who want a subsidy get it, to the detriment of common taxpayers and consumers who are not well enough organized to stop them. Thus, special-interest sinecures gradually build up over time.

Like a lot of public-choice theory, Olson's points seem obvious once he's made them. But somehow they had been neglected until he came along. Olson went on to apply his own logic in a 1982 book called *The Rise and Decline of Nations*. He started with a series of observations about European economies after World War II. Olson noticed the obvious: that the countries badly damaged by World War II, notably Germany, thrived after the war, while Britain, presumably a vic-

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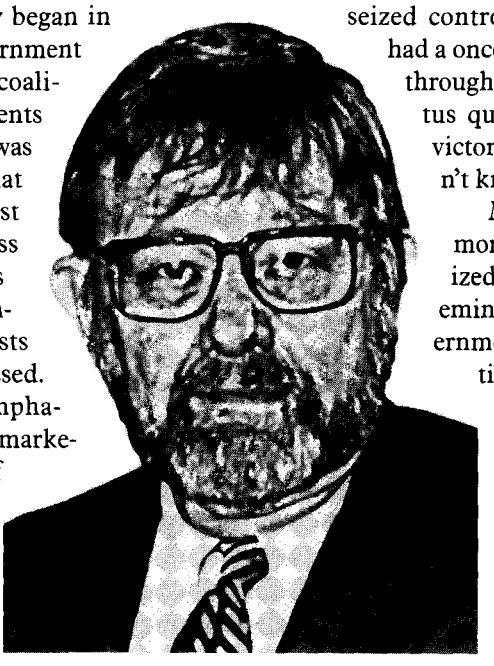
tor, did not. His theory was that in stable nations special-interest groups grow like carbuncles on the national economy, gradually weighing it down with inefficiencies, subsidies, and sinecures. In countries like Germany, by contrast, the trauma of defeat had obliterated all the special arrangements—Olson called them "distributional coalitions." Unencumbered, these countries could adopt new technologies more quickly, allocate resources more efficiently, and govern more effectively.

Olson was not merely saying that the governments in stable democracies get too big over time. He noted that the postwar German and French governments were not necessarily less intrusive than Britain's, and that Britain's decline actually began in the late 19th century, when its government was quite small. Distributional coalitions can afflict private arrangements just as surely as public ones. Nor was he saying that the government that moves most decisively is the most efficient. He argued that the Swiss have maintained high growth rates because their government is so cumbersome. Even the special interests have trouble getting measures passed. At the end of his book, Olson emphasized that he was not a pure free marketeer. He appreciated the power of markets, but he did not believe that the government that governs least governs best: "There often will *not* be competitive markets even if the government does not intervene. The government is by no means the only source of coercion or social pressure in society." Olson paid homage to Milton Friedman, but also argued that recent economic history does not always support the free-market view. Some laissez-faire nations achieve only low growth rates, while more dirigiste nations show higher growth rates.



Nonetheless the policy implications of Olson's work—which he was hesitant to draw—clearly bolster those who want to reduce the size and intrusiveness of government. In 1994, Jonathan Rauch wrote a compelling book called *Demosclerosis* that applied Olson's logic to the American context. Rauch showed how distributional coalitions—lobbyists, special interests, entitlements, and so on—have been accumulating in Washington and strangling democracy.

Recent history certainly bolsters the Olsonian logic. The Asian nations, after a period of phenomenal growth, seem to have become hobbled by accumulated nepotism, special-interest subsidies, and rigidities they allowed to build up in their economies. Western Europe has not maintained its rapid growth and now slogs along with high unemployment. Britain was stagnant until Margaret Thatcher disturbed public and private rigidities, and now that nation flourishes. In the United States, the situation is bifurcated. The economy thrives. Perhaps the downsizing trend of the 1980s swept rigidities away. New and youthful sectors in places like Silicon Valley are relatively unencumbered and drive economic growth. But the American political system remains bogged down with rigidities and distributional coalitions. In 1995, when they seized control of Congress, the Republicans had a once-in-a-generation chance to smash through all that, but the forces of the status quo proved too powerful, and the victorious Republicans themselves didn't know where to focus their energy.

Maybe if they had read Olson more carefully they would have realized that the real threat to American eminence is not simply the size of government. It is the distributional coalitions. It is the rigidities and special interests, both public and private, that clog up American life. They wouldn't have gone for all that simple-minded government bashing. They would have focused their assault on the special arrangements (including the ones that favored their own people). They also might have realized that sometimes only government is powerful enough to smash special arrangements that have evolved in the private sector.

Mancur Olson is still worth reading first of all because he reminds us that nations do decline and that America, for all its current prosperity, will eventually lose the status of top dog. In the 1970s and '80s, there were a lot of bogus declinists—Paul Kennedy worrying about imperial overreach, a slew of Asia specialists trumpeting the Pacific century—but that doesn't mean it is silly to worry about decline. More important, Olson reminds us that America's preeminence rests on its ability to be dynamic and flexible, not on whether the federal budget happens to be at 20 or 25 or 30 percent of GDP. He was a remarkably clear and thoughtful economist. On reflection, I am amazed that a contemporary writer so sensible ever got assigned to college freshmen. ♦

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"IN CHAMBERS"

"Listen," I said to my friend, "I don't mean to use God's name in vain. It's that, in vain on earth, do we seek a resolution to the case that confounds us. So, to heaven we turn."

"O.K., tell me." my friend replied.

The Judge banged his gavel. He called the disputants to the bar. Leaning over, he whispered to them. "Enough of this unseemly spectacle in this public court of law. Spare America. Spare yourselves. Spare the presidency. Meet me in my chambers in a few minutes, please."

They did. The President, the First Lady, Vernon Jordan, Monica, Paula and Gennifer. Forthwith, he confronted Monica. "Do you know who I am?"

"Yes, your Honor, you're the Judge of all of us."

"You know I know the truth then."

"Yes."

"Bury the past, Monica. Slam shut the door to it! Pass through the open door to truth. Outside, the sun shines. The birds sing. The garden grows. A new day dawns. No more frowns greet you, only smiles. Tell the truth. Live in fame. Stay in favor. Stop the sordid flow of tabloid sleaze. It feeds the voracious appetite for still more repulsiveness."

"Thank you, your Honor. I had not thought without the truth I'd sink and with it I could swim."

"Paula, Gennifer," the Judge said to them. "Neither one of you has said this. Your lawyers have not said it to you." He paused. "The President could well be the injured party." Shocked silence. "He's not well. Pity him. In defense of himself, in defiance of you, he digs an ever deeper hole. The majority support him for only surface reasons. They begin to alter their perception of him. He digs deeper and deeper for himself as well as for them." Turning to Vernon Jordan, he said, "Right?"

"I get the point, your Honor." Vernon Jordan answered. "On the record and in the press, it seems to many and to myself, the President forgot to tell me all the truth."

"Well spoken, fairly stated, Mr. Jordan," the Judge assured him.

"Mr. President and the First Lady," the Judge began with them. "I know the truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God, for that is who I am."

"Why would ten lawyers accompany a member of your staff to appear before Mr. Starr unless there was something to hide? What about the unusual recurrence of the same malady that afflicts the President always involving women?"

"This flaw, this ailment, illness or malady is dangerous to the President. Since established precedent calls for a presidential candidate to make public his state of health, why was the public not put on notice as to his malady? Had that been done along with assurances that his illness was being treated, it might have been enough for the public to know."

"As for you, the First Lady, great credit for loyalty to your husband in sickness and in health. American women, on the one hand, applaud you. On the other, they wonder, since your husband's ailment is considered a classic case of immaturity, why then, did you spare the rod and spoil the child?"

The First Lady replied, "What can we say that we have not said already?"

"Two emergency exits are available to you both," the Judge went on. "One is to acknowledge your husband's malady and have it treated. The other is for your husband to resign for reasons of health."

"Which exit?" The President wondered.

"Either one. The worst history will ever say in either case is "Wasn't it sad the President took sick. Wasn't it wonderful the First Lady stood by her husband to see that he got well again."

Then said one of them for all the rest, "God's in His heaven all's right with the world."

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UNAFRAID OF GREATNESS

Paul Johnson's History of America

By Newt Gingrich

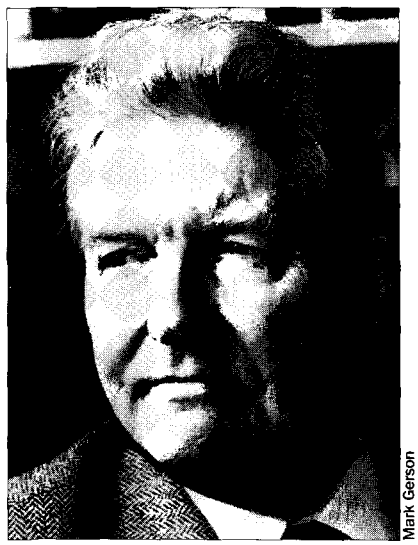
Paul Johnson has written perhaps the most important history of the American people in our generation. He raises the key question about America and its nature: "Is this in fact a learned civilization and are there characteristics and traits unique to the American people that make them, because of their cultural experience in becoming Americans, different from other people?" And he not only answers the question, "Yes," but he provides a remarkable framework of historical study to support his case.

Let me confess at the outset that I am a Paul Johnson fan. Now sixty-nine years old, he remains a prolific columnist for the London *Spectator* and other British publications. And he remains as well an indefatigable writer of big, compelling books covering wide swaths of history—his mammoth *History of the Jews*, for instance, or his *Intellectuals*, in which he surveys the development of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers. His thousand-page account of the birth of our age in *Modern Times* may be the most provocative and thoughtful history we have in this century. As a former socialist who came to adopt far more conservative values, he has not only been a great adviser to Margaret Thatcher, but he has brought a unique talent for understanding left-wing thought to his explanation of conservative values and conservative attitudes.

And let me confess as well that, like Paul Johnson, I believe America is a great country filled with good people, that we are a unique, learned civilization, and that there is something different about being American: People are born Chinese or European or African, but we learn to become Americans.

A former professor of history, Newt Gingrich is speaker of the House of Representatives.

In his latest large tome, *A History of the American People*, Johnson is, as usual, clear, forthright, and daring. He takes his epigraph straight from Shakespeare: "Be not afraid of greatness"—certainly one of the most politically incorrect comments on America by a contemporary intellectual. He begins his preface, "This work is a labor of love," and he goes on to close it with the words: "I do not acknowledge the existence of hyphenated Americans, or Native Americans or any other qualified kind. They are all Americans to me: black, white, red, brown, yellow, thrown together by fate in that swirling maelstrom of history which has produced the most remarkable people the world has ever seen. I love them and salute them, and this is their story."



Mark Gerson

Paul Johnson
A History of the American People
HarperCollins, 921 pp., $35

If only for this reaffirmation of American uniqueness and the existence of a genuinely American civilization, Paul Johnson's book would be worth reading, but it shows, in addition, a remarkably insightful understanding of the core elements that have powered this civilization. Johnson understands the role of religion in America: the importance of religious thought, the Declaration of Independence's assertion that "We are endowed by our Creator," the sense that America is directly endowed by God and responsible to God. It permeates his book in a way that no modern liberal understands—which is why modern liberals are blocked from ever completely understanding America.

In addition to grasping the core religious framework of this country, Johnson understands the second tradition that lies at the heart of our history: the tradition of individual democracy, grass-roots populism, anti-authoritarianism, and anti-government sentiment. Johnson correctly identifies the origins of the American Revolution in the religious impact of the Great Awakening, but he notes as well that while the American colonists paid remarkably few taxes, they resented every single penny. The modern anti-tax movement can trace its roots directly back to a knowledge present even in the colo-

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nial period: the knowledge that every penny and every power government gets comes at the expense of personal freedom and personal opportunity. This tension between the individual and the state is deeply embedded in classical American civilization, and those who reject it demonstrate just how distant they are from the American tradition.

I could not agree more fully with Johnson's focus on George Washington as the central figure of the revolutionary movement: He is the genuine Founding Father, the foundation on which this nation is built. Washington's personal character was, in fact, more important than his intelligence; his capacity to discipline and master himself and spend his life in service to the American nation was the rock upon which the country grew. I would question, however, the degree to which Johnson dislikes and criticizes Jefferson, a president who intellectually played a much larger role in defining America than Johnson gives him credit for. But, all in all, the author handles the founding of America with great skill.

As the book turns in subsequent chapters to examining the nineteenth century, readers will be surprised by Johnson's emphasis on the importance of free land; the rise of popular culture; the impact of technology; and the degree to which entrepreneurship and the creation of wealth made America a better and different country in ways that had nothing to do with government or social or political theory.

Johnson treats Lincoln and the Civil War in an effective, if relatively conventional manner. He has, however, a remarkable section—entitled "Huddled Masses and Crosses of Gold: Industrial America, 1870-1912"—that is profoundly revisionist in its understanding of the importance of invention, of entrepreneurship, and of Andrew Carnegie as possibly the most important American between Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. It forcefully presents a coherent model of a wealth-creating productive class that also took citizenship seriously, along with an account of philanthropists like Carnegie, who gave away virtually all his money before he died. The pages Johnson devotes to Carnegie—the man's personal culture, philosophy, and witness to the importance of those who have been successful helping those who haven't—are worth the entire book.

Johnson is convincing well into the twentieth century, all the way through the 1920s. Readers will be forced to agree that Woodrow Wilson was a very important leader who both defined America's moral role in the world and created much of the modern, strong presidency. They will come to share Johnson's belief that the 1920s were a much more successful decade than modern liberal academics have suggested and that it is a profound error to suppose the Great Depression to have been inevitable. Coolidge proves to have been a fairly effective president who had a very precise philosophy of an effective but minimal state presiding over an enormously successful society that was growing rapidly, increasing its wealth, bringing the poor into the middle class, and inventing a new generation of technologies (including the mass-produced car, the radio, the refrigerator, and the beginnings of television).

The real breakdown was not in the 1920s, but in Hoover's interventionism and his efforts to apply Luden-

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dorff's command-economy model to a free society in peacetime. Hoover's interventionism extended and deepened the Depression, and what should have been a two- or three-year panic followed by a recovery (in the classic mold of 1892-93 and 1907) became the Great Depression, in part because of state intervention both here and abroad. Because the state blocked the market from recovering and the state blocked capital from investing, the state created conditions that made it artificially harder for the recovery to take place.

To some degree, the reader must concur when the author applies his critique of Hoover's interventionism to Roosevelt's. But I disagree with Johnson about Franklin Delano Roosevelt, probably more than about any other topic in his book. *A History of the American People* understates the dangers and difficulties Roosevelt faced, the complexities of leading America, and the importance of Roosevelt's contribution both to reestablishing middle-class democracy and to leading the nation into its international role as the most powerful country in the world. This role was taken up within the framework of the United Nations and other international institutions—essentially American creations based on American power—structured to extend to the planet the American values of the rule of law, the right to private property, free speech, freedom of religion, and free elections. In this sense, Johnson undervalues Roosevelt's power as a visionary—even while he accurately states Roosevelt's destructive tactical behavior as a manipulator and as a man untrustworthy on many occasions with his allies at home and his allies abroad.

One almost wishes that Johnson had published as a separate book his pages that cover the era from 1960 to the present, for they may very well cloud the first 80 percent of his magnificent history. The critique of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, the Watergate coup d'état by the Left, and the Clinton administration in *A History of the American People* is so harsh, so intense—using so many revisionist insights and revisionist events—that it will stun and startle readers. Johnson is contemptuous of the modern Left in America. He regards it as a corrupt, power-oriented movement totally lacking in principle, willing to indulge the most venal and decadent behaviors while wearing a mask of complete hypocrisy. Virtually unending in his condemnation of the Left, Johnson's analysis might have led to a wonderful firestorm of debate had he published it by itself. But I fear it may prove a distraction from a remarkable and, on the whole, extraordinarily accurate restatement of two-hundred years of American civilization as a unique, religiously based, freedom-oriented, low-tax, high-entrepreneurship system.

Nonetheless, the book remains one of the most important works on America in our generation. It should be read by every college student and by every advanced high-school student—to say nothing of their teachers. I would challenge every reader to hold its core assertions: *America is a civilization; we are one people; there is a religious base to our freedom; and entrepreneurship, invention, and work create far greater wealth than any bureaucracy in history.* For a clear and powerful and persuasive statement of these truths, we owe Paul Johnson a great debt of gratitude. ♦

Kevin Chadwick

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THAT NEW-TIME RELIGION

The Literary World Finds God, Or Something

By John Wilson

During a recent interview with the *Paris Review*, Robert Pinsky—the current poet laureate of the United States—was asked about his "increasing fascination with religion and religious imagery." In reply the poet declared, "My mother's mental illness and her scorn, at times, for everything the world believes may have made me especially sensitive to the phenomenon of belief, the discovery of meaning. . . . For a person who practices some particular religion, creation is a major episode in the career of God, whereas for me, God is a major episode in the career of creation."

Rick Moody and Darcey Steinke, eds.
Joyful Noise
The New Testament Rediscovered
Little, Brown, 250 pp., $23.95

Among America's cultural elite at the tail end of the twentieth century, Robert Pinsky is hardly alone in being fascinated with religion—Scientology, the Eastern religions that have attracted dabblers from the American upper class since the late Victorian days of Madame Blavatsky, but most of all Jewish and Christian religion. There are famous people meeting regularly to discuss the Bible, like the study groups featured on Bill Moyers's popular 1996 PBS series, *Genesis*. There is even something of a vogue for the Kabbalah: Sandra Bernhard, Laura Dern, Jeff Goldblum, Isaac Mizrahi, Roseanne, and Madonna are among the celebrities said to be studying this form of Jewish mystical theology.

Countless cover stories and special issues have reported on spirituality's return to hipness. "Religion Makes a Comeback," read a headline in that most sensitive of weathervanes, the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. The major news magazines, the thought journals, and a wild profusion of others ranging from slicks like *Mother Jones* and the *Oxford American* to little magazines like the *Indiana Review* and *Witness* have all have gotten considerable mileage out of the recent "religious turn" in American culture. To be sure, most of them have felt compelled to preface their religious coverage with a note of editorial reassurance, lest their readers take alarm—while some have even felt it necessary to indulge in hand-wringing over the decision to cover religion at all in their pages. But, as *Mother Jones* editor Jeffrey Klein explains, since "the doctrinaire hegemony for which the religious right is fighting assaults the most basic tenets of a pluralistic society, we cannot allow spirituality to be the exclusive preserve of the politically conservative." What else is a poor progressive editor to do?

Some commentators have taken these conspicuous flirtations with the sacred as signs of an imminent religious revival, and since God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform, it may be so. But if the Great Awakening of our age is approaching, the evidence must lie elsewhere. Religion's latest crop of fellow travelers may be very interested in the "phenomenon of belief," but it quickly becomes apparent that they would never do anything so vulgar as actually "believe" anything—that is, believe in the way practicing Jews and Christians believe when they pray to a God who is something more than a product of what Pinsky calls humankind's fascinating "addiction to creativity." Indeed, what is most striking about the much-ballyhooed "religious turn" is the extent to which it is divorced from the experience of millions of believers.

Nowhere is this divorce more evident than in the stack of recent books in which America's leading literary lights—poets, novelists, playwrights, essayists—explain their fascination with the Bible. The latest entry in the genre is *Joyful Noise: The New Testament Revisited*, a collection of original essays edited by Rick Moody (whose dark novel of suburbia, *The Ice Storm*, was recently released as a major Hollywood film) and Darcey Steinke (whose latest dark novel of suburbia is called *Jesus Saves*), both of whom are the children of pastors.

The introduction to *Joyful Noise* invokes William James's 1902 classic *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, but Moody and Steinke ungenerously fail to acknowledge models much closer to hand—for the genre was, if not invented, then at least popularized in the 1980s by a man named David Rosenberg. Rosenberg (a former editor-in-chief of the Jewish Publication Society who is described on the flap copy of his own work as "the leading translator of biblical poetry and poetic prose in our time") first gained notoriety in 1991 for *The Book of J*, a biblical study for which he supplied the translation and Harold Bloom the commentary. This preposterous but widely reviewed volume argued that many of the most familiar stories in Genesis and Exodus (that strand of the Pentateuch labeled "J" by proponents of the "documentary hypothesis") were the work of a single, identifiable author: a woman (in her forties, Rosenberg specified) at the court of King Solomon's successor, Rehoboam.

Back in 1987, however, Rosenberg had put together a big volume called *Congregation: Contemporary Writers Read the Jewish Bible*. For this collection, Rosenberg assembled an impressive cast of contributors—

John Wilson is editor of Books & Culture.

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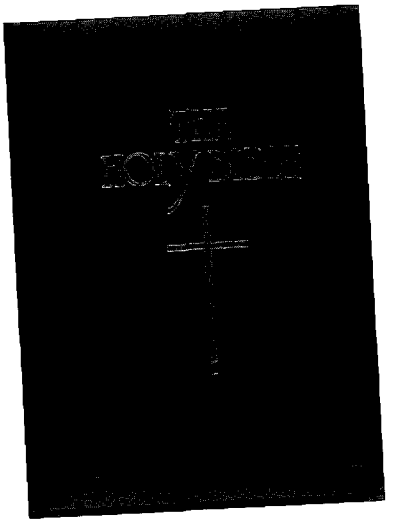
beginning with Isaac Bashevis Singer on Genesis—each of whom was to write on a particular book of the Bible. The quality of the writing was generally high, and many of the essayists offered penetrating encounters with the text, but it was apparent that very few of them were writing from the perspective of Jews for whom the Bible is the word of God.

This was not surprising, given Rosenberg's introduction, which instructed readers to take the Bible as a work of literature, exclusively a human creation, and to dismiss with that handy epithet "fundamentalist" all those Jews and Christians who think otherwise. But the formula was successful, and Rosenberg edited two similar collections in 1996: *Communion: Contemporary Writers Reveal the Bible in Their Lives* and *Genesis, As It Is Written: Contemporary Writers on Our First Stories*. While he stuck to the basic pattern of *Congregation*, and even reinvited some of the same contributors, Rosenberg grew increasingly grandiose in his introductions (the introduction to *Communion* is titled "A New Revelation"), and the essays he commissioned strayed from the biblical text—most of them instead exercises in the familiar type of autobiography that runs: "When I was a child, my parents made me go to church, and fortunately I have now escaped all that, but every once in a while I get nostalgic and misty-eyed for what I no longer believe."

Meanwhile, others were duplicating the formula Rosenberg employed in *Congregation*. Notably, there was the 1990 *Incarnation: Contemporary Writers on the New Testament*, edited by the poet Alfred Corn, who wrote in his introduction that the collection was "conceived as a complement" to Rosenberg's work. And then, in 1994, there was *A Tremor of Bliss: Contemporary Writers on the Saints*, edited by Paul Elie, a variant on the Rosenberg model. (Kathryn Harrison, in the days before her lubricious, best-selling memoir of incest, *The Kiss*, contributed the chapter on Catherine of Siena, which she entitled "Catherine Means Pure.")

Incarnation, however, was distinct from *Congregation* and most of the books that followed in its wake in including at least some strong voices of belief. The long, brilliant essays by Reynolds Price on the Gospel of John and Larry Woiwode on the Book of Acts, for example, are quite different in the way they approach scripture and the Church, but both reveal a sense of continuity with the common faith that the Bible is no ordinary book, but the self-communicated word of God. "If two thousand years



of pious handling had not dimmed both John's story and its demand," Price wrote, "his Gospel would still be seen as the burning outrage it continues to be, a work of madness or blinding light. Its homely but supremely daring verbal strategies, the human acts it portrays and the claim it advances—from the first paragraph—demand that we make a hard choice. If we give it the serious witness it wants, we must finally ask the question it thrusts so flagrantly toward us. Does it bring us a life-transforming truth, or is it one gifted lunatic's tale of another lunatic, wilder than he?"

It is precisely this "hard choice" that is evaded by America's literary hipsters on the Bible, and the contributors to Moody and Steinke's *Joyful Noise* prove no exception. There are some fine pieces in the book, particularly those by the Mississippi mannerist Barry Hannah and John Cheever's novelist son, Benjamin Cheever. And there are some genuinely creepy contributions, like Ann Powers's "Teenage Jesus" and bell hooks's "Love's Alchemy." But nearly all the essays are marred by a double-mindedness so deep it amounts to willful dishonesty. On the one hand, these writers refuse to accept scripture at face value: This is a book, the jacket guarantees, free of "dogma or cant." On the other hand, they are loath to reject the power and haunting promise in the Bible's stories. And so they mostly end up where, for example, the novelist Lisa Shea ends up: "In my own (lapsed Catholic) home, instead of the New Testament, I read my five-year-old son—and he reads me—animal stories from the *New York Times*, from the *Macmillan Animal Encyclopedia*. . . . I wish I could give my son what my mother tried to give her daughters—awareness of a world that promised life everlasting. But he's inherited a large measure of my dreaming, doubting, doleful nature. . . . Is doubt a form of belief? For me, the answer is yes. But it is an answer without end whose authority is undermined by my eternal skepticism."

This evasiveness, which takes various forms in the various essays in *Joyful Noise*, is characteristic of those who would try to make moral judgments while denying any universally binding basis for morality. Moody at least recognizes the contradiction, criticizing his generation for its abdication of responsibility and praising the Gospels as "great liberal documents in strong support of ethical universals." But so determined is he to avoid what he calls "a repressive interpretation of Christianity," he can't accept the logical conclusion of his own insight. His introductory diatribes against "the hegemony of

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the religious right" set the tone for the collection, and if most of the writers seem, like Lisa Shea, unsure of what they believe, they are very sure what they *don't* believe and what they *don't* like: They don't like "fundamentalists," by which they mean people like Reynolds Price and Larry Woiwode and anyone else who can affirm traditional religion.

The writers prove a strangely judgmental bunch, considering their antipathy for what they think of as the judgmental types—the Pat Robertsons and the James Dobsons—who too often speak for Christians in the public square. But it is the minimal presence of confession and repentance in these essays that is perhaps the most surprising. Many people over the centuries have found in the scriptures an account of human life that rings true, but that is so primarily because the Bible traces the bentness in the world not simply to some oppressive system (the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchal thinking" denounced by bell hooks, for example), but to ourselves—to me, to you. The plain old biblical word for this bentness—studiously avoided by the Moody crowd, except when set off in ironic quotation marks—is *sin*, and to acknowledge its reality is to acknowledge, in the words of Paul, that "the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

Sin is not a word that comes easily to those represented in *Joyful Noise*. Frozen in attitudes of adolescent rebellion, these writers seem mostly concerned to congratulate themselves that they are not like others—not mean and judgmental like those hypocrites on the religious right, not credulous or ignorant, like those dutiful churchgoers who actually believe in miracles and think that the Bible was dictated by God. (As Lucy Grealy puts it in her contribution, "I didn't want to turn into the type of person I'd regarded as stupid my entire life.") They are so smart, in fact, that they don't really need the Bible at all. "The ideal collection of writings about the New Testament," Moody writes, "would not be a series of essays about the canonized text but rather a *whole new set of Gospels*."

There is a parable in the eighteenth chapter of Luke that tells of two men going down to the temple. And one of the men stood and prayed, "I thank thee, God, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," while the other, standing far off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." It is a hard saying, and made harder when Christ explains: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." One likes to think that when Moody and all the other literary priests of the imagination sit down to construct their new and better Bible, this parable will survive. But it is difficult to see how it can, until they realize that scripture isn't about cultural realities, or doctrinaire hegemony, or the addiction to creativity. Believe it or not, the Bible is a book about sin, forgiveness, redemption—all that sort of thing. ♦

GUNS AND DOLLS

The New Military Makeup

By Robert D. Novak

In the summer of 1975, I visited the Korean DMZ with the allied commander, Lieutenant General James F. Hollingsworth. Nobody could be sure that the North Korean politburo would not seize this low point for the West to order an invasion across the border. Hollingsworth, who in 1972 had mobilized U.S. air power to destroy five divisions of North Vietnamese regulars, was ready with plans to win "a short, violent war" in Korea if the Communists struck.

He set our helicopter down in a valley where a detachment of American soldiers was stationed. Among them, to my amazement, was a slight young woman weighed down with communications equipment. The general and I chatted with her about the prospect that the North Koreans would come over the mountains—a fact she was well aware of and that left her unafraid. As we were leaving, I asked Hollingsworth how he felt about the possibility that this woman would be caught up in a war. The Texan—usually profane and voluble—only shrugged.

Brian Mitchell
Women in the Military
Flirting with Disaster
Regnery, 350 pp., $24.95

This episode surprised me because I had assumed that there was an ironclad law against women in combat. What I had not realized was what Brian Mitchell explains in *Women in the Military*. After the Vietnam War, from which females were largely absent, the military had aggressively recruited women for its all-volunteer force. In 1975, there were 109,133 women in uniform—5 percent of the total armed services and 44 percent more women than those in twenty other major nations combined.

It was just the beginning. Today,

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women make up almost 14 percent of the armed forces, nearly 200,000. "No other military in the world depends so heavily on women," Mitchell writes. Of Russia's strength of 4 million, only 25,000 (0.7 percent) are women. While American women are still not assigned to infantry, armor, special operations, or submarines, they are put in harm's way far more frequently than servicewomen elsewhere. American women are assigned to combat aircraft, surface ships, and ground units.

"The military has succumbed to the creeping influence of 1970s social upheaval," concludes Mitchell, a decorated infantry officer and intelligence agent who also has been a reporter for the *Navy Times*. The subtitle of his book argues that this is not merely an exercise in political correctness but a flirtation "with disaster." He contends that, while women are not needed in the armed services, "their expanding presence is destroying the military's body and soul."

Mitchell is blunt: "Nowhere are women required to meet the same physical standards as men, and nowhere are women subjected to the military's sternest trials of mind and body that many men face." Gender integration has produced "a general softening of military service." By eliminating standards that would "aggravate attrition among women and expose their limited abilities," the services have been deprived of "the highly trained and capable manpower needed to fight and win." Mitchell accuses the military of denying these truths: "From the top down, the example to follow is one of cowardly, self-protective deceit."

So, in Mitchell's view, the charge of extremism leveled last October by the Pentagon's Sara Lister, which forced her ouster as an assistant secretary, in fact had some merit. "The Marines self-consciously train warriors," he writes, "and compared to the new, more motherly Army, the Marines are indeed extreme."

Mitchell's description of training in the '90s is chilling for those of us who wore the uniform in the 1950s: Drill sergeants still raise voices, but not as often. They are forbidden to curse, call recruits names, or belittle them in any way. Harmless but humiliating punishments are no longer permitted. At the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, drill instructors carry laminated cards warning them not to apply any punishment that might cause a recruit "undue embarrassment," while recruits carry "stress" passes they can trade for convenient time-outs when the going gets tough.

Mitchell guides us in laborious detail—too laborious and too detailed, I fear—along the road to success traveled by such advocates of gender integration as former congresswoman Patricia Schroeder. (Most of these advocates had been fierce foes of the military during the Vietnam War.)

Their road became easier during the Carter administration, but, surprisingly, it was not appreciably more difficult during the twelve years of Republican control over the Pentagon. Dick Cheney, the Bush administration's widely acclaimed secretary of defense, is depicted as acquiescent to the point of approving feminization. Holdouts against women in combat were few and fading, notably Democratic senators Sam Nunn (now retired) and John Glenn (about to retire).

Of the gender-related scandals that Mitchell reviews—Tailhook, Aberdeen, Kelly Flinn—perhaps the most disturbing is the sad case of Navy lieutenant Kara Hultgreen. The twenty-eight year-old Texan was already qualified to fly the electronic warfare EA-6B Prowler, and she volunteered to fly the F-14 Tomcat twin-engined fighter when the Clinton administration in 1993 ordered that combat aviation be opened to women. (Women were given prefer-

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ence over men already in the training pipeline.)

But the F-14 was held by aviators to be the most difficult plane in the Navy inventory, with Hultgreen saying that flying it was "dancing with an elephant." Described by Mitchell as having a "poor record" handling the Tomcat, she had trouble with aircraft-carrier landings and failed her first attempt to qualify as a carrier pilot in April 1994. An anonymous fax sent to a San Diego radio station said Hultgreen was "an accident waiting to happen. Every one of her squadron mates knew it, but they could not speak for fear of reprisal." Records showed her "making power corrections that were erratic and unpredictable." Standard practice was violated when she was not called before an evaluation board despite four faulty landings.

On October 25, 1994, attempting to land her F-14 on the deck of the *Abraham Lincoln* fifty miles off San Diego in clear weather and calm seas, Hultgreen "for some reason" swung wide on her approach. She then failed to correct, responded tardily to warning signals from the carrier, and ejected too late from the plane, rocketing straight into the water. Her body was found three weeks later.

The official investigation report was supposed to be secret but was obtained by *Newsweek* correspondent Gregory Vistica, who said it "spelled out in clear and direct language Hultgreen's many mistakes that led to her death." Nevertheless, the Navy insisted on engine failure as the cause and gave Hultgreen a hero's funeral at Arlington. "Only by exonerating Hultgreen," writes Mitchell, "could the Navy avoid yet another Congressional inquisition led by Pat Schroeder and Barbara Boxer and the likes of John McCain and David Durenberger."

The cover-up of the Hultgreen affair epitomizes the gloss put on gender integration by the Pentagon—including propaganda claiming that women performed well in the Gulf War. A poll of that war's veterans by the Roper organization showed a huge disparity between the ratings of men and women, with more than half of Army and Marine Corps women rated "fair to poor." Roper reported that sexual activity had a negative impact on unit morale. "But ultimately," writes Mitchell, "we won, we won easily, and nothing else mattered."

But what about the next war? As combat-readiness diminishes thanks to gender-integrated service academies and basic training, U.S. ground deterrence loses credibility. Mitchell's concern that the military can be "reduced to a cowardly and corrupt institution, a high-tech danger to free peoples at home and abroad" may be premature—but he nevertheless recognizes a threat that is truly horrible to contemplate. ♦

CANNIBALIZING LITERATURE

The Movie Makes the Book Look Better

By John Podhoretz

SUNDAY, MARCH 1. Everybody always talks about how brilliant the Walt Disney Company is at marketing, how it can take a movie like *Beauty and the Beast* and turn it into a wildly successful stage show in New York—complete with a pushcart out in front of the Palace Theater selling Disney tchotchkes. But right across the street from that pushcart is the threadbare Times Square triplex into which Disney has dumped its latest movie release, *Krippendorf's Tribe*. This is a film that should have opened in art houses and been promoted as the literate adult farce it is. Instead, it has been dumped into second-tier theaters with an ad campaign that will appeal only to morons—perhaps because it was designed by morons whose reputation for marketing genius is undeserved.

Krippendorf's Tribe is an academic satire, a farce about anthropology in the guise of a family comedy. Richard Dreyfuss plays the title character, a distinguished anthropologist whose success is largely due to his wife's brilliance. She has died, and he has collapsed into a shambles, neglecting his three children and his work. He has been living off $100,000 in grant money for field research he has never conducted into a supposedly undiscovered tribe in New Guinea.

To keep himself out of prison—his department chairman has already had another grant bum hauled off to jail—he invents a tribe notable because the family unit is headed by a single parent. And he fabricates documentary evidence by splicing together real footage of New Guinea tribes together with staged footage of his children, Shelley, Mickey, and Edmund (from whose names he came up with his mythical tribe's moniker, the Shelmikedmu).

His research stuns the anthropology world, in particular a randy young professor named Veronica Micelli (Jenna Elfman) whose lust for Krippendorf is exceeded only by her hunger for publicity and fame. She hooks him up with a new anthropology cable channel that is, of course, especially eager for footage of the sex life of the Shelmikedmu. Whom will Krippendorf recruit to stage this footage? And what of the rival professor, Ruth Allen (brilliantly played by

Editor of the editorial pages of the New York Post, *John Podhoretz is a contributing editor to* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Lily Tomlin), who has gone off to New Guinea to see whether she can duplicate Krippendorf's research?

Like all satires, *Krippendorf's Tribe* is, at root, a work of vicious cynicism—a corkscrew depiction of a world in which everybody is craven, nobody is admirable, and there is no hope. But in the hands of director Todd Holland and the Disney pablum machine, *Krippendorf's Tribe* is very uncertain in tone, one moment a sentimental sitcom, the next a mistaken-identity farce. It could have been a genuinely great comedy, and I suspect that in the early stages of Charlie Peters's screenplay, it was much darker and funnier.

I suspect that because *Krippendorf's Tribe* is based on a 1985 novel by an English sociologist named Frank Parkin—one of those inspired works of academic satire that seem to pour inexhaustibly out of Britain. In Parkin's uproarious and unsettling novel, Krippendorf is not a widower, but a cuckolded house-husband whose foreign-correspondent wife does everything she can to avoid coming home, knows nothing about her three children, and has contempt for her mate. His children are living as close to the state of nature as Islington will allow; when his prepubescent son is not trying to kill the neighbor's animals, he is in trouble for doing things like reprogramming the school computer to erase Sociology from the curriculum. "I think," Krippendorf explains, "he felt it was too heavily biased toward the positivist tradition."

Krippendorf is not driven to invent the Shelmikedmu out of desperation, as the movie has it, but out of a simmering madness that comes from living in excessive proximity to anthropological texts—and with out-of-control children. His monographs and articles about the Shelmikedmu are hilarious examples of gobbledygook anthro-speak in which his deepest wishes are secretly fulfilled: "Shelmikedmu believe that children are the natural prey of malignant spirits. These spirits normally enter the child's body through its mouth whenever adults are present. Consequently, children are required to keep their mouths tightly shut whenever they are in the company of men. Those who break these rules have their mouths stuffed with rancid cassava pulp and bound closed with strips of reed. . . . Boys and girls are required to keep their heads bowed whenever their father is present."

Parkin's conceit grows more and more involved as the Krippendorfs really do turn savage—staging a daylong celebration of the teenage daughter's menarche, then (perhaps in tribute to Evelyn Waugh's classic satire of Africa, *Black Mischief*) cannibalizing an evil nanny before heading off to the Amazon with a bunch of tourists whom they will presumably eat as well.

How Disney ever got interested in making a movie from Parkin's splendid novel (now rereleased in paperback) is a great mystery. Nonetheless, Charlie Peters and Todd Holland did manage to turn out a decent, intelligent, if silly movie—not that you'd ever know. Maybe the Krippendorf family should cannibalize the Disney marketing department.

Wednesday, March 4. Literary adaptations have become all the rage, in part because there is so much hunger among adult audiences for great stories. But now movies are being made from famous novels that were not written for the purpose of telling a story but rather because their authors wanted to explore the complex inner nature of human consciousness. This is not what movies are for, to put it mildly. Indeed, it amazes anybody who has actually tried to read Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove* that somebody made a movie out of it—much less one in which the camera spins around like a top as Helena Bonham Carter parades herself in the nude. Henry James is spinning in his grave faster than the camera.

But at least there is some kind of story in *The Wings of the Dove*. The whole point of the latest movie adaptation, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, is that it has no plot—it is a free-flowing account of a day in the life of a woman who throws a party and a man who kills himself, and it is entirely interior. I think it's high-toned and dated nonsense, but whatever the merits or flaws of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the novel was an effort to do something movies cannot do and should not try to do: capture the stream of consciousness and the interior flow of human thinking.

The movie version of *Mrs. Dalloway* is hilariously awful. In an effort to portray the woodenness and banality of the title character's life, the movie itself becomes wooden and banal. Vanessa Redgrave, a great actress notorious for her anti-Semitism, is unexpectedly terrible as Clarissa Dalloway—she walks through the movie with a weirdly beatific smile on her face as though she had just taken five hundred milligrams of Prozac and chased them with a giant martini.

Then there's the "Septimus" problem. The suicidal character in the piece is named Septimus. Screenwriter Eileen Atkins never lets us forget this because she has Septimus's wife, Rezia, refer to him by name in almost every single line of dialogue she speaks. "Septimus, I'm going for a walk." "Septimus, people are staring." "Septimus, what's wrong?" "Septimus, what is it?" I half-expected him to turn to her and shout, "Yes, yes, my name is Septimus, we all know my name is Septimus, now would you shut up, already?" But alas, it was not to be.

Krippendorf's Tribe is far more intelligent than *Mrs. Dalloway*, even though it is far less highfalutin'. Surely the people suffering through *Mrs. Dalloway* with me in their search for superior entertainment would have vastly preferred *Krippendorf's Tribe*, but there's not much chance they will ever see it. ♦

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"When we got off the plane from D.C. yesterday afternoon in Teterboro Airport, there were two cars waiting. One was a white stretch limo, so I got into the other car instead, since I think large cars like that are pretentious. Went to my hotel off Central Park, where I changed into my tuxedo. I don't wear them very often—not since I was at Harvard in a men's club where they wore them all the time. Melinda helped me with the cuff links, they're so hard to get on."

—*Microsoft CEO Bill Gates in his* Slate *"Diary," March 4, 1998*

Parody

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Day 3: Wednesday, March 4, 1998

Logged on to my bank the other day (I do all my banking online) and I was glancing through my current account balances and I was kind of surprised to find out that I have $47 billion in my checking account. "Here's something kind of neat," I called out to Melinda. "Did you know that I'm the richest man in the history of the world? Golly-gee-willickers, now I can afford to hire two dozen of the most expensive lobbyists in Washington. That'll be supercool."

Melinda couldn't hear me because she was on the other side of the bedroom, which is a fifteen-minute walk from the side I was sitting on. I don't like really large houses because I think houses like that are pretentious, but this $40 million mansion just kind of sprung up around me. I don't know how it happened since I'm just an average Joe and not at all a voracious monopolist or anything, or any other sort of person who the Justice Department anti-trust division might need to worry about. Anyway, this whole house thing is kind of annoying because I don't really know the way to the kitchen, and sometimes I'll be checking my e-mail and I'll be in the mood for a cheeseburger or a pizza or some other kind of food that is eaten by us regular, average middle-class non-monopolistic guys, and I won't know what to do.

Usually I end up driving down to campus, which is this large collection of buildings I happen to run, where groups of wonderful nerds like me sit in these really extreme offices pulverizing the dreams of small start-up companies that may someday compete with us. So anyway, I'll be really hungry for a cheeseburger or something and I'll come into the cafeteria with my plastic tray and styrofoam cup—which are very normal-guy kind of utensils—and I'll have trouble getting served because of this silly company policy that says all Microsoft employees have to prostrate themselves on the floor when I enter a room.

In fact, the last really good meal I had was at the *Time* magazine 75th anniversary party. I'm going to sound like a namedropper here, which I hate, because even though I control the universe I'm really amazingly shorn of affectation. But I was at this fantastic table with Raquel Welch, Imelda Marcos, Pol Pot, Sharon Stone, Slobodan Milosevic, Leni Riefenstahl, Charles Nelson Reilly, and a jar representing the Ebola virus, and *Time's* Walt Isaacson came over and said something that really made me think. "I'm terrified that America may be captured by what I call the 'cult of celebrity,'" Walt said, "We've got to rediscover the difference between honor and mere fame. *Time's* mission over the next few years will be to lead this effort." I think I'd like to get some other companies involved in that too and if they refuse I'll just screw up their software. And as I was leaving the party and looking for a subway token (taxis are so pretentious), Al Gore came up to me with

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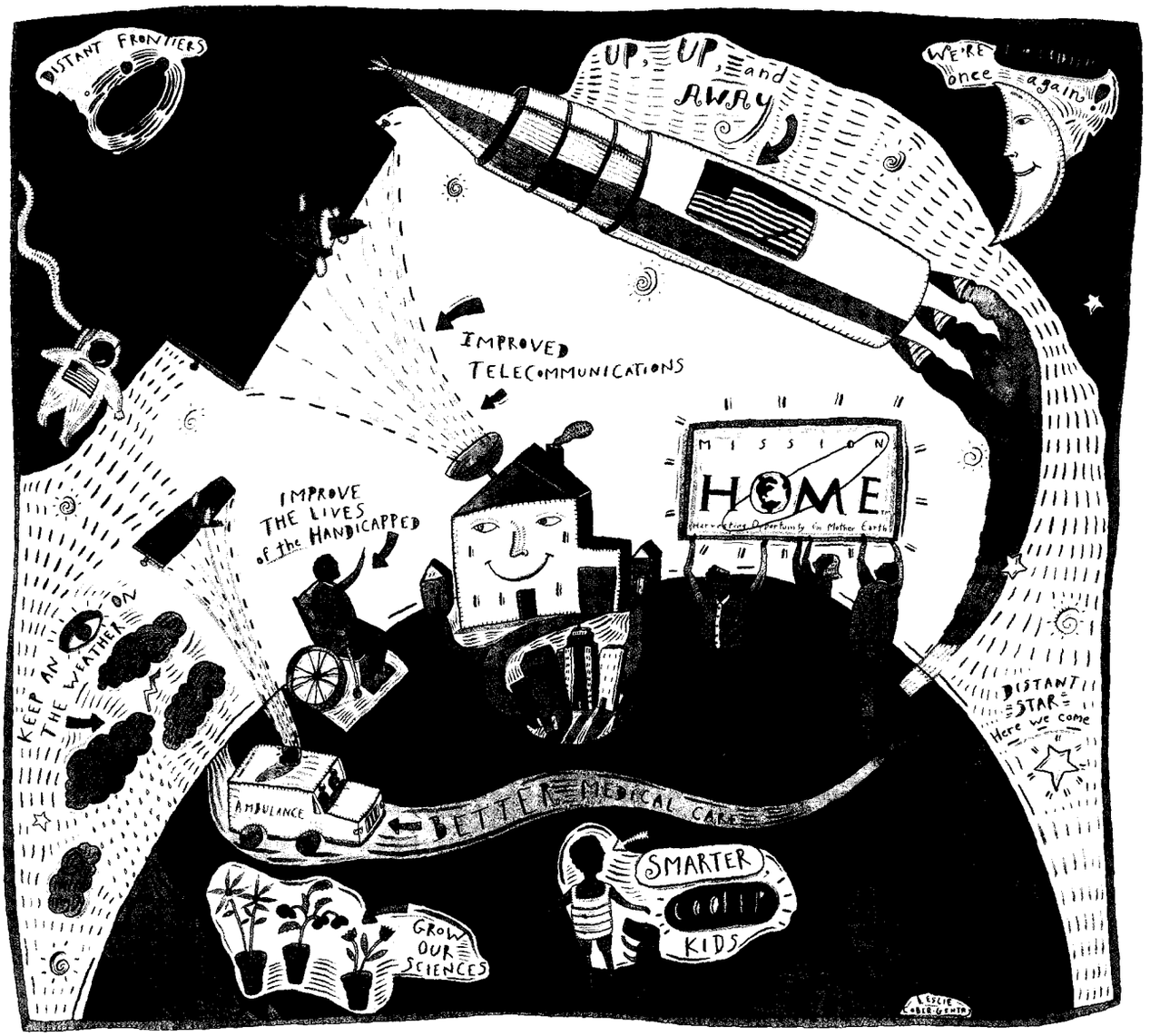

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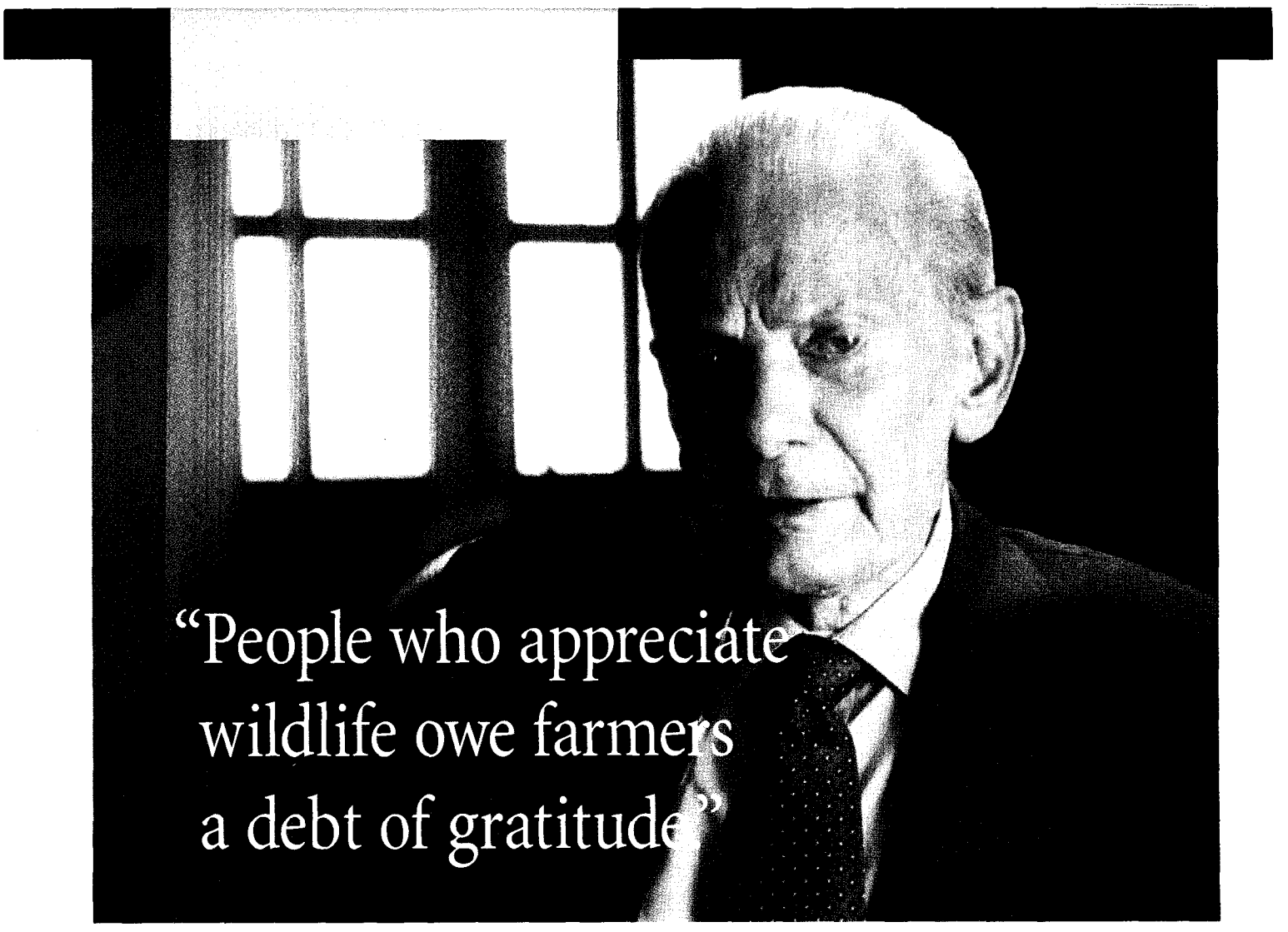

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